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March 3, 1885.

Vol. XVI.

Single
Number.

PUBLISHED WEEKLY BY BEADLE AND ADAMS,
No. 98 WILLIAM STREET, NEW YORK.

Price,
5 Cents.

No. 397.



OR,

The Prince of Mulberry Street.

BY JO PIERCE,

Of the New York Detective Force.

CHAPTER I.

BOB'S PURCHASE.

"THAT ain't a bad sort o' a show; guess they've got somebody in thar that's got a n' artistic eye. Wonder ef my pardner couldn't fix up our stock in a sorter elewated style. It's true peanuts ain't a very showy article o' commerce, but Stumpy kin git everything outer them that thar is in 'em."

The speaker was a boy of about fourteen years, who was gazing at one of the many show-windows which ornament Fourteenth street. It was a glittering sight, and the lad fully appreciated the artistic taste shown.

He did not look like an artistic person himself. He was by no means handsome, and the ill-fitting clothes which covered his rugged per-

"HAND OVER DHE PURSE AFORE I CRACK YE WAN."

son were about as ragged as they could be, and hold together upon him.

One glance was enough to show that he was one of the sharp, wide-awake boys who enliven the streets of New York in various ways. Street Arabs, they are commonly called, but they could give points to any genuine Arab and still cut the ground from under him.

This particular boy was still by the window when a young lady, handsome and stylishly dressed, approached in company with a male escort, a young man who was gotten up without regard to expense. They made a very striking, aristocratic appearance, but that she was not oblivious to the claims of poverty was shown as the young lady, seeing a beggar by the curb, went down into her pockets for money to relieve his wants.

Then she started and looked surprised.

"Dear me, Mr. Bertrand, I have lost my purse," she said.

"More likely your pocket was picked," said her escort, glancing about. "Thieves reap a rich harvest in Fourteenth street crowds. Here is just the kind of a fellow that would do it, now."

His last remark referred to the boy by the window. The latter had looked around at the young lady's remark, and his gaze met Bertrand's anything but amicably as he was spoken of so unjustly.

"Who're ye callin' a feller?" he retorted.

"I meant you, you scamp. What have you in your pocket?"

"Last time I felt there, there wa'n't nothin'," the boy promptly replied.

"Turn your pockets inside out," ordered Bertrand, sharply.

"Not fur Joseph. S'pose I'm a paper collar, ter be turned twice a week? Not ef I knows my business."

"You had better obey, or I'll call an officer."

"I'm sure he has not taken the purse," said the young lady. "He doesn't look like that kind of a boy. Besides, he was innocently looking into the window."

"Glad ter see you're a pusson o' sech ripe judgment, miss," replied the boy. "What do I want o' a purse? Take me to be a Rogue's Galaxy gradcoate? Not any fur Joseph. I'm a 'spectable merchant in a 'stablished business. Ask any o' the crowned heads o' finance w'at they think o' me. They'll tell ye Bob o' the Bowery is above pickpocketin'."

"This show of innocence won't answer," declared Bertrand. "Miss Abbott, we must settle this matter. Ah! here is an officer now."

Sure enough, a blue-coated policeman was pushing his way through the crowd that had gathered around the trio, and he was soon made acquainted with the state of affairs.

He looked fiercely at Bob o' the Bowery.

"See here, ye young ragamuffin, hand over dhe purse a ore I crack ye wan wid me club. Oh! I know dhe loikes av yez. I'll run ye in; that's w'ot I'll do."

"S'pose ye will ef ye say so, fer I observe ye're bigger'n me by several pounds, 'specially 'round ther stomach. I want'er impress on your mind, though, that I'm a merchant in good standin', an' ef I'm jugged you'll see ther crowned heads o' finance round ter bail me out."

Bob preserved his coolness well in this emergency, but Bertrand and the policeman were so dead against him that all the young lady's arguments were going unheeded when a new actor appeared on the scene in the shape of a well-dressed young man, who first bowed to Miss Abbott, who plainly recognized him, and then turned to the policeman.

"I appear as a witness for this boy, officer. I do not know how many pickpockets there may be around here, nor who they are, but I can swear that the boy has been standing quietly by the window the last ten minutes. My attention was attracted by his interest in the fine things displayed there, and I watched him with amusement. He did not take the purse."

"Oh! I was sure of it, Mr. Redding," exclaimed the young lady. "Poor little fellow, I am sorry you were unjustly accused."

"Av coorse your worrud settles it, Mr. Redding," said the fat policeman, "but I still think dhe b'ye is a bad lot."

"I don't!" declared Miss Abbott. "I think he is an honest boy. Thank you for speaking, Mr. Redding."

She bowed and smiled to Redding, spoke kindly again to Bob, and turned away. Bertrand went with her, but he scowled at both Redding and Bob before going.

The crowd broke up, and only Redding remained near the boy.

"I owe ye one, boss," said the latter, "an' ef ye ever need a backer, jest call on me. I'm a merchant o' the Bowery, an' you'll find me right in front o' Abraham & Isaac's store. Peanuts is my line, an' ef I ain't in my office, my pardner, Stumpy, will give ye ther tip whar I be."

"So you run a peanut stand, eh?"

"Me an' Stumpy does."

"Is Stumpy your brother?"

"Not any. He's my pard, he is, an' he's all wool. I'm the purchasin' agent o' the firm, while Stumpy tends the store. That's 'cause he's a fire-eater. Ye kin see I'm a weak, delikit kid, but he's a fighter, Stumpy is, an' he kin wipe ther Bowery up clean with ther average bloke."

"You don't look very delicate," and Redding smiled as he surveyed the stout young figure before him.

"Pearances is deceptive; I'm 'flicted with a chronic digestion. But, see yer, you knew them, didn't ye?—I mean ther bloke who thort I was a Rogues' Galaxy chap, an' ther fine young female who thort I wa'n't."

"Yes, I know 'em," said Redding, shortly.

"His nibs, Bertrand, don't feel sweet on ye."

"Heaven knows I want none of his good will."

"How 'bout hern?" asked Bob, speculatively shutting one eye. "Hoss o' a diff'rent color, eh?"

"You young rascal!" said Redding, laughing, "you've got an eye, haven't you? But, never mind; Miss Abbott is to marry Bertrand, so you and I are left."

"The fine female hed better git left, too. That sassy bloke ain't my idee o' a good match. He's got too much old Adam in him, he has. Better look out fur him, or he'll try ter chaw ye up. I got onter his nibs' scowl; he's a regular pirate, he is. Wal, boss, I'm off. 'Member that I owe ye one, an' don't fail ter call at ther ole stand ef ye want a backer. So long!"

And Bob o' the Bowery walked away, musing as he went.

"I've ketched onter that racket. Redding, who's a chap o' the right stuff, is dead stuck on the gal, but that snake o' a Bertrand has got the inside track. I s'pect it's 'purty hard lines ter git left in sech biz, but mattermony is as unsart'in ez peanuts. Can't depend on neither. Wonder why Bertrand wanted me tooken in fur gittin' the leather? He knowed I never tuk it. I b'lieve that ere dude is a crook."

The boy walked on, taking in all that occurred by the way, and, having reached Union Square, turned down Broadway. In due time he found himself on Chambers street, near the Park, where he was accosted by a gray-haired man in garments which, though quite respectable, had the cut and fit of "way back."

"See here, my lad, will you do an errand for me?"

Bob looked at the questioner, and saw that he was very nervous. His hand shook, and he spoke excitedly.

"Wal, I'm open ter financial inducements."

"I want you to go to a drug-store and get a package of arsenic. I don't know how expensive it is, but here is a two dollar note, and you can keep the change. About four spoonfuls of the arsenic will do."

"See hyer, boss, d'ye know ther natur' o' ther mineral you hev allooded to?" asked Bob, suspiciously.

"I know it is a deadly poison. What of that? I am so troubled with rats that I can't endure it longer."

"Wanter extinguish 'em, do ye?"

"Why, of coorse. Will you undertake the commission?"

"Sart'in—fer sure. I ain't throwin' no job over my shoulder this winter—not fer Joseph. Whar'll I find ye?"

"Come to the hotel yonder," and the man pointed to one of the several at the lower end of Chatham street. "Ask for Adam Woodman, and bring the package yourself to Room 37."

"All right, boss; you'll find me loafin' inter yer gorjus quarters in 'bout ten minutes. Them rats can't git no bulge on me—not fer Joseph."

Bob walked away with a business step, but, as soon as he was beyond Woodman's sight, he winked knowingly.

"Rats an' p'izon! That sounds all right, but it's an ole dodge an' won't work. That chap meditates changin' his residence ter another spear. Suicide was writ all over his classical features. Did he take me fer a greenhorn jest out o' Castle Garden that I couldn't read what his shakes an' tremors meant? Suicide, straight ez a string. But I don't reckon he skips ther 'arthly spear with my help. I'll git some nice powdered chalk an' let him simmer. 'Spect no

drug-monger would give me arsenic 'thout a legal doctor's perscreptive, but any kid kin git chalk."

One "kid" could and did, and Bob was soon at the hotel with his prize. He had no trouble in being shown to Room 37, for the old man had left proper word with the clerk. He was soon knocking at the door.

A voice directed him to enter, and he obeyed. Woodman sat at the table, on which were several envelopes, directed and sealed. He had evidently prepared for his trip to the hereafter, but he was, if possible, more excited than ever.

"Did you get it?" he nervously asked.

"I did that, an' hyar she is."

Bob passed over a neat package. He feared the absence of a label on it would arouse suspicion, but Woodman was too much excited to think of anything of that kind.

He unfolded the package with shaking hands and looked at the white substance inside.

"I think the rats will not trouble me any more," he said, with a sickly smile. "Just to think that a little of this innocent-looking stuff would kill a man!"

"It'd knock him higher'n the Tribune spire."

"How much, do you think, would be necessary to kill a man?" musingly asked Woodman.

"I s'pect a pound would make him feel might uncomfor'ble," gravely asserted Bob.

"Nonsense! Would a teaspoonful do it?"

"V'ry likely it'd create an onpleasantness."

"Well, never mind; it's rats we're after."

Would you like to see me set a trap for them?"

"I'd enjoy it more'n goin' to Harrigan & Hart's an' settin' in ther fu'st floor, top."

"Then you shall. No more rats for me. Ha! ha!"

The old man laughed wildly, but Bob first winked behind his back and then became as grave as a judge as Adam turned about. The latter poured a little water in a glass and then added a quantity of the supposed poison.

"Ef convenient," added Bob, "I'd like what rats yer kill ter sell ter a Chinaman on Mott street. I've heerd tell that they eats rats, an' ef it's true, mebbe I kin make a dollar."

Woodman started, but his purpose did not waver.

"We'll talk of that later, boy. Behold the first rat!"

He had raised the glass with a shaking hand, and, at the last words, he swallowed the whole mixture at one gulp.

CHAPTER II.

A DOSE OF ARSENIC.

"BEHOLD the miserable rat!" added Woodman, dramatically.

"Whar is he?" coolly demanded Bob o' the Bowery, looking under the bed, as though he imagined the rodent was there.

"Why, don't you see I've swallowed it?"

"Yas, I see'd ye do it, but how in thunder d'ye expect the rat will git it now? S'pect he's goin' ter crawl down yer throat arter it? Ef ye do, you ain't wal posted on New York rats."

"Stupid! Why, I've poisoned myself. There are no rats in the case. I am the miserable wretch that is to die!"

And the old man dropped into a chair and clasped his hands over his stomach.

"By jingo! I ketch onter ther racket now!" and Bob brightened perceptibly. "I wondered that you'd tooken a contract ter cl'ar ther rats outter this hull hotel. Cricky! you're a sharp 'un, ole man; you're no slouch. Cut yer eye-teeth in yer yooth, didn't yer? I'm proud ter know ye."

"Boy, this levity is unbecoming. I have taken the awful step which shall end my wretched existence. In a short time I shall be a dead man."

"Sha'n't I go fer a stomach-pump an' one o' ther aldermen?" coolly asked Bob.

"No, no; remain where you are."

"All right; I ain't very busy, an' I kin jest ez wal stay an' see ye die ez not. Never see'd nothin' o' ther kind, an' it'll satisfy a nat'ral curiosity."

"The deadly poison is working. Sharp pains are rending my stomach," said Woodman, tremulously, his hands still clasped over that part of his anatomy.

"Hang onter it, boss; I'll back ye till my shoe-strings bu'st," said Bob, with enthusiasm.

"The awful moment is here."

"I hain't noticed it. Which is it?"

"I mean the moment of my death. Boy, I suffer terribly. I am on fire internally."

"Shoo! Better ring fer a fire-stinguisher," Bob advised, calmly crossing his legs.

"Thoughtless boy! you do not understand. It is a terrible thing to die; to leave this bright world and all it contains. Oh! I am a wretched, miserable man!"

And he arose and began pacing the room excitedly.

"I'd lay down ef I war you. It's ther fashion in New York ter die in bed, though all on 'em don't do it. Say, whar will yer funeral obsequials take place, boss? Reckon I'll git Stumpy ter 'tend ther store that day an' drop 'round. Don't s'pose yer heirs would object ter hev'n' my manly form thar, do ye?"

"Boy, boy, your cold indifference is terrible. I fear I have been rash. This is a serious matter."

"Oh! never mind; it'll soon be over. Them stage-folks that git salivated always cut up rough at fu'st, but they go off right peaceable in the end."

"Boy, go for a doctor!"

"A doctor?"

"Yes, yes."

"Why, he'll pump all ther p'izon out, an' ye won't die at all."

"I don't want to. Die? Mercy, no; I must not die. Oh! why was I so reckless. Quick!—go for a doctor!"

Woodman's voice arose to a shrill key, but Bob kept his place.

"So ye're all over wantin' ter 'vacuate this hyer spear?"

"Yes, yes. A doctor, quick!"

The old man dropped into a chair, pale and trembling.

"No doctor ain't needed," said Bob, coolly. "That air stuff ye swallowed wa'n't no arsenic, but jest chalk. Ef ther water don't kill ye, you're all hunki-dori."

"Chalk!"

"Yes. D'ye s'pose I was goin' ter be a party ter a suicide? Not fer Joseph. I see'd inter yer little racket, boss, an' I brung ye w'at won't kill rats ner men. Jest quit doin' high tragedy an' ye'll soon feel like a bed-bug when it's his night out."

Woodman did not know whether to believe or doubt.

"You are deceiving me," he said.

The boy walked to the table and swallowed half of the white substance Adam had thought so deadly.

"I kin eat that kind o' arsenic three times a day, raw, fried or on ther half-shell, an' never git a spasm. Jest you quit huggin' yer stum-jack an' you come 'round. Them terrible pains 's mostly in yer eye."

Adam's face had grown bright.

"My boy, you've saved me."

"Course I hev. I ketched onter yer raffle ther minute you 'costed me, an' ez Greenwood an' sim'lar places is crowded at this time o' year, I made up my mind ter save yer from gittin' slapped inter a box."

"I have been weak and cowardly. Nothing can justify a man in taking his own life, though my temptation was strong."

"What fer trouble was it that agertated ye?"

"It's a long story. I'm not sure you'd care to hear it."

"That's whar ye're wrong, ez I'll 'splain. Ye see, there's a chap on one o' ther daily papers hyar who is so lazy that his boots is never tuk off from ther time he buys 'em till they is wear'd out. He sleeps all day, while I skirmishes 'round an' gets p'int on local rackets. Then I tell 'em ter him, an' he writes 'em up, an' we divide the boodle."

"Hold on! I don't want the papers to get hold of my case."

"Then I'll keep it clost. I'm ez mum ez a copper when he's axed fer p'int by a kid, ef I'm told ter be."

Woodman's pains had vanished, and, having given up all idea of departing his present life, he looked thoughtful.

"Something impels me to confide in you, and I'll do it. There isn't much to tell. My home is, and always has been, in a small town in Connecticut. I was the father of two children, a son and a daughter. James was the older of the two. He came to New York when quite young, married, became the father of one child and then died, leaving them in comfortable circumstances. My daughter, Rose, married unwisely. She took a fancy to a young Italian who came to our neighborhood, and, when I opposed the union, ran away with him."

"That was bad," remarked Bob.

"It was bad for us all. I was angry, and I hastily declined to ever see her again. I never did; but, alas! it was the hand of death which prevented. At the end of two years I had resolved to forgive her when word came that she

had died, leaving a daughter a few months old. I came to New York, but could find no trace of either the child or its father."

"Tain't an easy place ter find a needle in."

"That was nearly thirteen years ago, and I heard no more from them until last month. Then I got a package of letters which gave me news. They stated that Paolo Donati, my daughter's husband, had died during a voyage to China, but that his daughter was still alive. The letters were written by a former shipmate of Donati, and, though he did not know where the child was—she must now be thirteen years old—he gave me such directions and addresses as were necessary to trace her. He wrote that it had been Donati's last wish that it should be done, and that the Italian hoped I would see to his child."

"My resolution was at once taken, and I prepared to come to New York. I came, and put up at this hotel. I was never good at remembering names of places and persons, and, once here, I sought for my papers to refresh my memory. The papers were gone. I made diligent search, but, in the end, was obliged to decide that some rough fellows on the train had picked my pocket. The papers were in a large, flat pocket-book I carried, and they probably thought there was money there, too."

"They had taken worse than my money; the clew to my grandchild's whereabouts was gone. I will not describe how I searched without their aid, nor how unsuccessful I was. Enough that every attempt failed."

"Couldn't yer son's folks chip in an' help ye?"

"They! Ah, my boy, they are not that kind. My son's wife always hated me, and when James died I saw neither her nor her son for years. It was not until it occurred to them that I had a good deal of money to leave to some one that they deigned to visit me. But they came too late. I knew them and their treacherous, hypocritical ways too well. Why, when James died his family was so distasteful to his widow that she actually dropped the name of Woodman and took her maiden name. She is a vicious, false and scheming woman. As for her son—well, Oscar Bertrand is his mother's child."

"Oscar who?" cried Bob.

"Bertrand. Do you know him?"

"I wouldn't swear ter it on more'n a bushel o' dictionaries, but I do know a 'rascocratic bloke named Bertrand."

"It matters little whether 'tis Oscar or not," said the old man, moodily.

"But I don't see yit why ye tried ter arsenic yer inner man."

"I'll tell you. One of the addresses I had was on Hudson street, though the number had escaped me. I began a hap-hazard search on that long street. At last I found a person who pretended to be able to give me information. I was taken and a cup of coffee forced upon me. I drank it, grew sleepy and knew no more until I found myself in a station-house, arrested for being intoxicated. As you may guess, I had been drugged and robbed, then set adrift."

"Luckily, a part of my money escaped their notice, and by paying the usual fine I was released. I came back here a wretched man. It had been a horrible experience to mix with the degraded wretches who were also prisoners, and I felt myself disgraced forever. My name was in the papers as being arrested and fined for being drunk. I knew the news would go to my native place. This made me gloomy, and when I thought of my desolate life, my dead son and daughter, and my lost grandchild, I grew desperate—mad, perhaps. It was then I resolved to end my existence."

"That's whar ye slopped over," said Bob.

"I'm aware that when a chap's down on his luck, his chin is 'clined ter drop. That's ther way in business. Now, thar's Stumpy, my pardner in ther peanut trade. He's got a pile o' grit an' is an awful fighter. I tell ye he's jest a howler when his mad is up. Why, he'll take a bloke twice his size an' wipe ther Bowery all up with him. He's bound ter be an awful slugger w'en he gits a mustache raised, is Stumpy, while ez fur his temper—why, boss, when anybody gives Stumpy lip, ther sparks o' fire jest fly outer his two noses."

"Indeed."

"Yes, but in business Stumpy is weak. W'en he takes a bogus quarter or half he gits all broke up. I kin see he's o' an arsenic natur', an' it requires all my 'floodence ter keep him braced up."

"I see."

"But 'bout yer case. Why don't ye see the sailor chap what writ ye?"

"I don't know where he is. He wrote that he was going on another voyage at once, but I don't know where."

"What do ther p'lice say?"

"I have told them nothing."

"Hey? You ain't?"

"No."

"Why ain't ye?"

"I'm not going to see my name paraded in print as another countryman taken in."

Bob whistled.

"Strikes me you're over-modest fer a man in diffikilty. By cripes! you orter tell 'em."

"Perhaps you're right," Woodman slowly admitted.

"Course I be. See yer, I've been through a heap o' 'sperience in ther last century, an' w'at I don't know 'bout things I allays try ter find out. Them is my ideas. Now, I know a private detective—an' he's a rampaginous thunder-blossom, too, is Wrixley—an' he'd jest shake his socks off fer delight ter help ye. He's ther daddy fur helpin' lame dogs over ther fence, an' when he takes holt o' a case his nose jest stretches out like india-rubber, he's so anxious ter ketch ther scent."

"Can you bring him to me?"

"Bet yer scalp I kin."

"Do it, then, and I'll make a bold campaign against the whole rascally set who have tried to ruin me," said Woodman, with energy.

"Now you're a-hootin' fer ther Fourth o' July. You're a pickle o' a kind fit ter eat, an' I'll chip in an' help ye ter scoop all New York an' sift ther clinkers out—I mean ther jaw-breakers o' law."

CHAPTER III.

BOB TAKES THE TRAIL.

BOB O' THE BOWERY left the hotel and hastened away on his errand. He did not find his friend, the private detective, however. Mr. Wrixley was out of the house and out of the city; so Bob walked backward, with the idea of advising Woodman to notify Superintendent Walling or Inspector Byrnes. Something ought to be done.

He reached the hotel and was about to ascend the second flight of stairs when the clerk called to him:

"See here, aren't you the boy that was up to 37?"

"I'm that same dumplin'," Bob replied.

"Well, Woodman has gone out. He left word for you to call at eight, this evening."

"Gone out?" echoed the boy. "What fer hes he gone ter do?"

"Don't know," curtly replied the clerk, who was not favorably impressed with Bob's rags.

"Which way did he go?"

"Don't know. He went with his friends."

"He did, hey? W'ot friends was them?"

"How do I know? Two men called, and he went away with them. Think they were detectives, by their cut of jib. They all went off in a cab. That's all I know, and you'd better go and give somebody a shine."

"W'ot d'ye take me fer? Do I look like a box o' blackin'? Not any, fer Joseph. I ain't that kind o' a ham sandwich. I'm a merchant in good standin', I be; b'long ter the Board o' Trade an' ther Royal Silk-an'-Satin Highfalutin' Club. Do these hyar hands look ez ef they ever flourished the bristles 'round tanned cowhide? Not any, fer Joseph!"

"Well, you'd better clear out and visit the Board of Trade."

"I'll slope ez soon ez you answer a few interrogatories. W'ot fer lookers was them two men?"

"Looked like detectives, I tell you. Both were large men. One had a red face and a small red mustache. The other was dark. That's all I know. Come, will you go? We don't want you for an advertisement."

"Jest one p'int more. W'ot sort o' a cab, an' hosses, an' driver, an' sich, was it?"

"I don't know. Confound you, do you expect me to be a horse-fancier and carriage-cleaner?"

"Spect that's w'ot you'd be ef you're in yer proper spear. Oh! wouldn't ye jest put on ther lugs a-washin' up a kerridge arter a spin through Central Park in ther mud! Why, Cleopatra's Needle would jest wobble with admiration. Wal, never mind; I'm off now, so ye needn't look so darned rusty. I usually puts up at ther Fifth Avano, an' ther classic rejins where I now be seems ter smell too strong o' extract o' onions. So-long; ef ye want ter see me ag'in, a'dress me care o' William H. Underbilt!"

And Bob walked out just as the indignant clerk

was about to charge on him. The boy reached the sidewalk and then paused in irresolution.

"Wot fer a racket is this? Who the blazes hez ole Adam gone off with, I'd like ter know. Friends? Go 'way! He ain't got no friends hyar. He don't know nobody 'cept Bertrand, ther dude, an' he wouldn't go with him ter so much ez a dog-fight. Detectives? Not any, fer Joseph. He said as he hadn't told no detectives 'bout his scrape, an' 'tain't likely they'd come in this-a-way onasked. Ther idee is circumnavigatin' my brain-market that ole Adam has got figgered ag'in. He takes ter trouble like a Chinaman ter shirts, an' it wouldn't surprise me ef he was gobbled by bunco-steerers. Or mebbe Dude Bertrand has tooken him in outer ther wet. Ther old chap has hard lines, anyhow."

Bob remained for some time in deep thought, but every minute added to his belief that Woodman had fallen into evil hands. He discarded the idea that the unknown men were merely city sharpers; they would hardly seek a victim as Adam had been sought; and the idea that the old man's previous enemies had again struck at him seemed to Bob the most likely of all.

He was given to bold moves, and he went at once to a Directory and looked for the name, Oscar Bertrand. He found it, with the residence, which was above Madison square, and then he went down into his pocket, fished up a nickel and boarded a Fourth avenue car.

"I'm goin' ter visit ther dude an' see w'at he's made on. Ef he's ther same bloke that tried ter git me pulled in on Fourteenth street, ther jury 'll find him guilty 'thout trial. I'll investigate, an' ef I find he's been kidnappin' Adam, I shall feel it my juty ter notify ther coppers an' make a cyclone warp Oscar's classic form out o' plumb."

The car was proceeding up the Bowery when a temporary blockade was caused by the fall of a car-horse on the track. Bob stepped off, and, by so doing, noticed a pair of so-called musicians by the curb.

One was a gray-haired old man, who was plainly an Italian, and who was grinding a wheezy organ. The other was a tambourine-girl. She seemed to be about thirteen years old, and, despite her humble clothing, was very pretty, with a plump, fine face and the dark eyes of Italy.

Bob was at once impressed. He remembered Woodman's missing granddaughter. From the first it had been the boy's theory that Paolo Donati, being an Italian, would naturally put his daughter among his own kindred. Possibly this tambourine-girl was the missing heiress.

He heard the old man call her "Bianca," and was about to approach and address them when the car started. He sprung aboard, and the musicians were soon left behind.

"Bianca! That's a purty good sort o' a name, an' she's a right good looker. Now, I don't s'pose she's Adam's granddaughter, but it might be so. Reckon I'll hev ter waltz over ter Mulberry street an' sorter look up the rag-pickin' element. Ther ain't no knowin' how many heiresses is herdin' in that air classic precept."

The car rolled on and, in due time, Bob was left near the palatial residence of Oscar Bertrand. He made his way at once to the house, looked critically at the brown-stone front and then rung the bell.

A smart colored man sprung into sight almost as suddenly as a jumping-jack, and the door was opened, but the colored gentleman looked disgusted when he saw the boy.

"Is Oscar inter ther house?" Bob coolly asked.

"Wot, sah?"

"I put ther interrogatory. Is Oscar inter ther house?"

"Reckon he am. What ob it?"

"What ob it? Wal, I ain't talkin' about no orbit. Do ye see anything in my 'pearance ter remind ye o' a 'stronomer? D'ye see a telescope 'tached ter my cartridge-belt? Observe any dockyments 'bout Mars, Wenus or Plato in my hip-pocket? I reckon you don't, but wot has that got ter do with baked peanuts? Nothin', fer Joseph. Wot I want ter be infermationed is, is Oscar inter here?"

"Not ter sech a chap as you-un," said the colored gentleman, loftily, and he would have closed the door had not Bob's foot got in the way.

"Now, you see yer, Sambo, I ain't takin' no guff from anybody ter-day. I'm a radical, I be, an' when I set out ter hoe 'taters I kiver up all the weeds. You jest mind that, my rooral clam-digger, an' 'tend ter business. I've got the most important biz with Oscar, an' I'm goin' inter here ter interview him. Say that I'm secretary o' the Boord o' Health, come ter insult him 'bout ther cholera episode in Paris."

Before more could be said a young lady em-

erged from the parlor, and Bob's face brightened. It was Miss Abbott, who had figured in the Fourteenth street case.

"I thought I recognized your voice," she said, looking brightly at the boy. "Did you want to see Mr. Bertrand?"

"Sech was ther drift o' my remarks ter this black-walnut statoo o' ther Goddess o' Liberty, but he couldn't grasp an idee ef Bedloe's Island was ter rise up an' wipe him one outer ther ear."

"Dear me! what a funny idea," said the young lady, laughing. "But come into the parlor. You shall be under my charge until Mr. Bertrand is at liberty."

"Ef I don't never git inter any wuss comp'ny, I allow I sha'n't be expelled from ther Board o' Trade," gallantly replied Bob o' the Bowery.

He followed Helena into the gorgeously-furnished parlor, where sat a severe, sharp-faced elderly woman whom he correctly judged was Oscar's mother. She raised her hands in horror as she saw the boy and his rags.

"Helena, my dear child! why have you brought this object here?" she cried, in a thin, petulant voice.

"This 'object' came on a hoss-car, an' 'twan't none o' ther one-hoss bob-tails neither," the boy explained. "Sorry I hev made so up-hill an impression, but I ain't a sheriff nur a alderman. Don't be afeerd."

"How dare you speak so disrespectfully to my mother?"

It was a new and angry voice, and as Bob turned he saw Oscar Bertrand in all the glory of a regular dude suit.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" he added, in amazement.

"Why in the world are you here?"

"I'm here 'cause I ain't nowhar else. Did ye s'pose I was settin' on ther tower o' Brooklyn Bridge? No, I'm hyar, an' I've come fer ter see yer grand-dad, ole Adam Woodman," Bob answered, his coolness not in the least disturbed.

Oscar and his mother exchanged glances. Was it Bob's fancy, or did each face bear a look of alarm?

CHAPTER IV.

THE PADRONE PRINCE.

THERE was a moment's silence, and then Mrs. Bertrand spoke in a voice at once uneven and sharp.

"We know nothing of Adam Woodman. How dare you insinuate—"

Oscar made a quick gesture, and her sentence was not finished. As for the young man, his ebullition of anger had given place to a calmness which struck Bob as being suspicious.

"Why do you come here to ask for him?" he inquired.

"'Cause he left word at ther hotel that he war gone w' two friends o' yourn, fer ter visit ye hyar."

"Impossible!" said Oscar, and he really looked startled.

"Wot's onpossible?"

"That he should leave such a word."

"I consider that air an insinuation ag'in my veracity, an' ef I was a knocker-out I should git up on my ear an' walk all over yer Turkish carpet, but it air Stumpy who is ther fightin' member o' ther firm. He's a terror, is Stumpy, an' wot he don't know 'bout knockin'-out ther Boston artist, Mr. John L., will teach inter him next April fool-day. But, bein's I am only a man o' peace, I merely rise ter remark that wot I said Adam said is wot Adam said, as I before said."

"He has not been here," Oscar declared.

"Then whar did yer friends take him?"

"No friends of mine have taken him anywhere."

Bertrand's voice was quite calm, but he looked at Bob in a way far from being friendly. Indeed, the boy saw a menace in his eyes which indicated future danger for Bob o' the Bowery.

"Wal, they had ther giant gall ter use yer name, didn't they?"

"Did they use my name?"

"They did, for sure."

Bertrand gave his weak mustache a vicious pull. Bob was convinced that he had "struck ile," as he mentally expressed it, for the dude was decidedly nervous. Had he really abducted his relative?

"I don't understand this at all," he replied. "I did not know that Mr. Woodman was in the city. Where has he been stopping? Why was he here? Who was it claimed to be my friends?"

"Wal, ez ter why he war here I ain't prepared ter say; all I know is that two chaps claimin' ter be friends o' yourn called at his hotel an' tuk him away in a cab. I'm purty well 'quainted with Adam, I be, an' I tho't I'd jest run in fer ter see him."

"He's not here, nor has he been here, and any one claiming to be friends of mine were— but, wait; I think some one has fooled you. Who gave you the message—the clerk? He fooled you."

"I ain't fooled so easy ez my 'pearance would seem ter indercate. I hev got ther case down purty fine, an' ef Adam ain't hyar I s'pect ter find whar he is afore ther night. Coppers tal e ther ball at ther corner saloon. My nose ain't 'bove ther av'rage fur size, but it's ekull ter a back-yard cat's fur smellin' mysteries out. Wal, seein's how yer granddad ain't hyar, I'll cut out an' visit ther store ter see how much ha'r Stumpy has pulled ter-day. S'pect he's knocked ther stuffin' out o' 'bout half ther Bowery boys—he's an awful bruiser, is Stumpy."

"Where do you live, my boy?" asked Miss Abbott, kindly.

"Hev got several residences. My orifice is in ther Produce Exchange buildin', but I hev telephones runnin' ter ther Five Pints, Fifth Avenue Hotel an' High Bridge. Go ter any o' them places an' say 'Hello!' an' you'll git a reply by ther mornin' mail."

"Oh! how can you exaggerate so?"

"Me? That air is somethin' I never do. W'en I sez a thing, you kin bet yer diamonds it's a straight tip. Ask Stumpy an' he'll tell ye that w'en I sez peanuts is peanuts, that's jest w'at they be."

"I shall have to call and purchase of you some time."

"We're always glad ter see our friends ef they come with ther collat ter pay cash. We don't keer ter trust—hope ye won't think it brash ef I say so. Stumpy is awful set in his way, but he's a blue-blood financier with high shoes. Drop in on us an' we'll use ye squar'. Our peanuts comes right from ther South Pole, an' was growed under ther eye o' ther Czar o' Russia."

Bob was watching the Bertrands while he talked. They exchanged glances, and he thought they were significant and troubled. Plainly, they did not want him in the house, but Oscar, who had been so ready to bully him before, said nothing more that was rude. Had he learned to fear the boy?

The latter's business was done, and he now took his departure. He walked down Madison avenue in a thoughtful mood.

"I'll bet a pint o' peanuts I've struck ile. Them pond-lily aristocrats ain't ther kind ter give themselves dead away, but they looked mighty broke up when I give 'em that deal. I reckon I let loose a devastatin' epidemic, an' it struck in. Bet my boots—ef I had any—they know wharfore Adam lit outer ther hotel so suddint-like. They decoyed him away, an' w'en I said ez how them two abductors said they came from Oscar, it jest give him a mighty onhealthy feelin' 'round ther stummick, fit ter make him belch. Now then, whar's Adam?"

Bob shut one eye and looked steadily at a lamp-post, as though he thought Adam might be hiding there. But he wasn't.

"S'pect I'll hev ter resolve myself inter a committee o' one an' hunt up that old chap. He's all wool an' a yard wide, an' ez he's got heaps o' hay-seed in his hair he needs a competent male protector in this hyar modern Babylon. I'll let Stumpy 'tend ther store an' lick them t'other chaps, an' I'll buy me a compass an' eye-glass an' hunt up Adam. When I get him I'll send him straight back ter Squash Holler, with a ticket on his back so't he won't git lost."

Night was drawing near, and the boy walked rapidly from Madison to Union Square, and then on down Fourth avenue and the Bowery. Stumpy had removed the stand and closed business for the day, on account of threatening rain, so Bob wandered idly through Houston street.

Not far had he gone, however, when a sharp cry came from a cross street, and, looking in that direction, he saw some sort of a confused struggle in which a man and a small girl were a good deal mixed.

His first idea was that it was merely a father punishing his daughter, but a second glance showed that, while the small girl was very ragged, the man was flashily dressed and not more than twenty-five years old.

Bob's ardor at once aroused. He had a natural antipathy against "dudes," and, believing one of this kind had molested a poor girl, he dashed to the rescue.

"Hole up, thar, an' give the cadaver a show. It's a-comin' on stilts, an' it's just full o' meat. Thar is bones in its knuckles, an' don't ye furgit it. How did it feel?"

The last question was asked as the young man lay sprawling in the gutter, where Bob's half-blow, half-push assault had flung him. But he bounced up quite nimbly.

Then Bob saw for the first time that the man was an Italian. There was no mistaking his swarthy complexion, black hair, eyes and mustache, and style of dress. More than that, he was an Italian dandy. He wore velvet pants and coat, the latter short and "nobby," while his vest had patterns of various flowers laid on in figures. His fall had soiled his clothes, however, and the fresh barber-shop odor he emitted was now mixed with that of the gutter.

He came up a very angry man. "You young demon!" he cried, in good English, "how dare you lay hands on me? I'll make you sweat for this! Just let me get at you—"

But Bob did not let the Italian get at him. The former was the more agile, and in a series of short races easily kept out of reach.

"Why don't ye come an' see me? Drop 'round any time an' I'll shake my socks off fer joy ter see ye. I'm ter home, and ther latch-string is out. Drop in—do! Ye got me then whar ye missed me afore. Oh! why don't ye happen 'round my way, ye maccaroni gal-whipper chap?"

The Italian paused, out of breath.

"If I could get hold of you, I'd break all your bones!" he declared, shaking his fist at the boy.

"Wot's my bones got ter do 'bout it? S'pose I'm goin' ter crack 'em all up ter please a Mulberry street dude? Gosh all rat-bait, I ain't no pile-driver, nur my hoofs won't make glue. Wot seems ther diffikilty, Maccaroni?"

"How dared you touch me?"

"Oh! that's nothin'; I'd got ter wash my hands this week, anyhow."

"Do you mean to say I'm not clean?"

"Ef ther barber what scraped yer phiz had shaved ye all over it'd been a bang-up idee."

"You young ruffian, if I could see an officer I'd have you arrested at once."

"Ther coppers ain't afeard o' me. I'm a politician, with infloence, an' I kin keep ther family entrance open Sundays an' it's all hunk. How 'bout yer thrashin' this gal? Strikes me ye'd better shove them patent-leather coal-scuttles 'round ther corner afore a cop comes 'round with a hickory mizzen-mast an' cracks ye one on ther attic."

The Italian seemed impressed by this suggestion, and after a few more words, stalked away. Then Bob looked for the first time at the girl, who was somewhere between ten and fourteen years old, and who possessed a bright, saucy face, red hair and almost as many rags as Bob.

"Hello, Nan!" he exclaimed. "Possible that's you?"

"Tain't nobody else. Wot fur did yer take me?—a Murray Hill belle?" readily replied Nan.

"Not any, fer Joseph. Ye don't ring loud 'nough fur that sorter brass angel. Wot's ther row 'tween you an' his nibs?"

"Nothin' much, only he war goin' along, an' he looked so mighty purty I throwed an onion at him, fer luck."

"Gosh ter blazes! Did ye? Did ye, r'aly, Nan? You're a trump keerd, made in Center street. Come ter my heart?"

And Bob opened his arms.

"I ain't in ther heart biz this week. Next Monday I 'pear at ther Union Square as Juliet, I do, an' you'll git ther colic fer ter see how I put on lugs."

And Nan executed a little legitimate drama in pantomime, swinging her ragged skirts as gracefully as a professional.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Bob. "You'll make ther stars all sick when you do that act, an', mebbe, we'll hev a wuss 'arthquake hyar than they've got inter Spain."

"No 'arthquake won't swaller you."

"They won't, hey? Why not?"

"They're arter solids, not light weights."

"Come, now, Nan, I didn't think that o' you, but I s'pose 'lowance 'll hev ter be made fur yer bringin' up. Ye ain't moved in 'spectable s'ciety, an' that makes a difference. Wot you want is a bucket o' Croton an' a cake o' soap. But, see yer; you'n me mustn't fight, Nan; sech ole pards hev no biz ter git by ther ears. Lemme ask ye of ye knowed Maccaroni?"

"Me know him? Lawsee, yas; ez wal ez my brindled cat knows rats. He's ther Prince o' Mulberry street."

"Ther which?"

"He's Marco Gambora, ther Prince o' Mulberry street."

"Great Scott! an' I called him Maccaroni. Why, ef I'd knowed he was from ther classic precepts o' Mulberry street I'd 'a' called out that Garabaldi was come ter town, ridin' on a pony. But who is this hyar Prince?"

"Don't you know?"

"Not any, fer Joseph."

"Wal, he's a big-bug 'mong them Maccaronis. Pop Dukes sez he's a padrone; I dunno. But w'en his nibs gits inter fine work all ther Italians jest trots arter him. He's a daisy, is Marco—same ez an ape is. Wouldn't he make a purty sign fur a junk-store, ef he didn't smell himself up with patchouli an' stale beer?"

Nan spun around on her heel and cast reverence for the Prince to the winds, but as she did so she saw a folded paper lying in the gutter.

"Must 'a' fell outen his nib's pocket. Wot fer hen-tracks is these hyar cobwebs?"

"Let me see it. Yer 'arly education was neglected in yer youth. Lemme peruse Maccaroni's love-letter. Hey! wot's all this?"

"M. G.:—The place will do, if your men are faithful. Get W. away from the hotel at once—he may blab. Hold him tight. Will see you very soon. Don't injure the old man. BERTRAND."

"Hello!" ejaculated Bob, as he read the last word. "Bertrand, hey? Great Scott! this is like I've struck ile. 'Get W. away from the hotel.' Who's W.? Snakes an' bed-bugs! who is he ef he ain't Adam Woodman?"

CHAPTER V.

BOB VISITS THE ITALIANS.

NAN looked at Bob o' the Bowery in surprise. "See yer," she said, "you ain't tuk ter bug-juice, hev ye?"

"Not any, fer Joseph; but this epistle lets a powerful sight o' light inter ther rat-trap whar I keep my brains. This hyar note means biz, an' I s'pect I've struck ile. 'M. G.' stands fur Marco Gambora, every day in ther week arter early mass, an' 'Bertrand' is Oscar, ther dude, an' 'W.' means Woodman, from Squash Holler, wi' hay-seed in his hair. What I s'pected is true; ther up-town dude hez stole Adam, an' ther Prince o' Mulberry street is inter it. I say, Nan, whar does this hyar Prince hang out?"

"He's a curbstome 'rastocrat."

"So I should remark. But whar does he snooze?"

"Dunno. Ax 'em on Mulberry street. He's a 'lectric light thar, an' they'll put ye enter him. But, lawsee, I can't stan' 'round hyar chinnin' all day. I'm off. Say, Bob, ye're ain't b'en 'round fur a month."

Nan twisted her apron a little bashfully.

"Go 'way; I was thar last week; 'member it, 'cause 'twas ther day Stumpy licked four men. But I'll drop in ag'in. Mebbe I'll send ye 'round a diamond ring or a gold watch in the mornin'. Watch fer 'em, an' ef you see 'em you'll know they've come."

"So has Christmas. You ain't puttin' out yer collat this week fer them as needs it."

She retreated down an alley, while Bob winked solemnly. Some emotion made his mouth pucker comically, and his eyes beamed admiringly on Nan, but he soon returned to the letter he had so luckily found.

"I'm arter it, sart'in sure. I kin see vict'ry loomin' up like ther 'lectric light over Hell Gate. Adam, ole pard, you'll soon see me arter ye, an', by cripes, I'll ship ye back ter Squash Holler by the fust Norwich boat, ef they'll take sech brittle goods. Adam, I'm arter ye. Oscar, ther dude, has stole ye, but don't ye spill ther briny tears too much; I'm arter ye. Wonder whar Marco Maccaroni lives? I'll take a disinfectant an' then wisit ther classic precepts o' Mulberry street."

Bob did not wait for the disinfectant, but went to Mulberry street and began his inquiries. He was not at first successful, for the Italians were reticent concerning the "Prince," but the boy adopted the plan of pretending to have a letter for Gambora, and was then shown the house where he lodged.

It proved to be a somewhat better-looking one than the others around it, but every sign went to show that it was well filled with people, like all the houses in the Italian quarter.

The young detective had done all he cared to do without deliberating carefully, and he was retracing his steps when he saw a hand-organ, an old man and a small girl approaching. At first glance he recognized the parties he had previously seen on the Bowery, and he looked sharply at Bianca. She was a very pretty young girl, with black hair and eyes, and round, red cheeks, which were almost like rich peaches.

Bob o' the Bowery had an eye for such things, and he found himself wishing that Nan, who claimed and easily held his allegiance, could part with her red hair and get such glossy black locks as had this daughter of Italy.

But the great question in the boy's mind was, was this girl Adam Woodman's granddaughter? He had no reason for thinking so, but the idea would come in spite of all, and he resolved to know where she lived.

As they passed the girl looked at him steadily, and with more than a passing glance, and her black eyes were like velvet.

"Cricky! she's a good one!" thought the boy, as they went on. "Ef Adam's got sech an off-spring ez that he's a lucky chap, an' I'll help him till my knees wobble. Hello! whar be they goin'?"

It was no wonder Bob was surprised, for the girl turned and entered the house where the Prince lodged, and the old man would have followed had not a fellow-countryman accosted him at the door.

"What luck, Tomaso?" he asked.

"Bad-a, bad-a," the organ-grinder replied, shaking his gray head. "Men hoard-a their money this-a hard winter."

"They do the same-a with me-a. Rags is scarce, and-a when we git-a them they sell-a bad. If only the-a cholera comes, we shall be-a in better luck."

"Why so, Josef?"

"Ah, I don't know-a, but they all tell-a me so. But you should do well-a with the bright eyes of-a Bianca to draw trade-a. They tell me Marco Gambora has-a looked at her admiringly."

"Marco can't have-a Bianca," Tomaso hurriedly declared.

"Eh?"

"Bianca is but-a thirteen. She can't-a marry yet."

"Not-a to Marco?"

"No. She is but a child-a. I do not like-a the Italian way of marrying girls at so early age-a. The American way-a is better. Besides, Bianca has American blood-a."

Bob o' the Bowery started, but pretended to be busy with a few coins he had taken from his pocket.

"But think-a of Marco," urged Josef. "He is a great man-a."

"How does he-a live?" asked Tomaso, frowning. "You and I know, Josef, but it is not-a wise to tempt Marco's knife."

"So no more, Tomaso," was the hurried reply. "The Prince may be near. I will bid-a you good-day."

Then Josef hurried away, the organ-grinder entered the house and Bob was left alone.

"Wal, by cripes, that's sorter int'restin'," he muttered. "So Bianca hez 'Merican blood inter her veins? P'int one in favor o' my scheme. I'll worruk this hyar case up, an' ef it should prove she's a descendant o' ther Squash Holler chap wi' hay-seed inter his hair, I reckon I'd scoop in a boodle. I'll worruk it up, an' mebbe I'll strike 'ile. An' ther decent Italians is afeerd o' ther Prince, is they? Strikes me he's a Tartar o' some sort. 'Member now that Nan said he's a padrone. As nigh ez I kin ketch onter ther padrone racket, he's a sorter brigand on ther sly. S'pect as how Marco Maccaroni lives by bulldozin' his neighbors outer their collat. Wal, he's jest the bloke ter help Oscar, ther dude, an' I'll look inter it. But how'll I do it?"

Bob scratched his head meditatively.

"Go to ther p'lice? Not any, fer Joseph. Would they b'lieve me if I said Oscar was inter a scheme ter worrit an' jug ole Adam? Nary time. Oscar lives onter Murray Hill, an' he's a bigger toad than I be. How'll I git at him? Git Stumpy ter knock him out, Marquis o' Queensberry rules? Not any, fer Joseph, fer that wouldn't find Adam. I reckon as how I've got ter go inter ther Prince's palatial residence an' see if ther gent from Squash Holler is inter it too."

Just then Bob happened to raise his eyes, and he stopped short as he saw Marco Gambora coming toward him. He had not himself been seen, and, at that moment, the Prince turned and entered a basement saloon where some son of Italy sold the stale beer so dear to the Italian palate.

"So his nibs is arter a booze. Wal, that's all right, I s'pose, but I wonder what sorter a dive this is."

The boy went to the front of the saloon and managed to look down. The place was dark and none too sweet-scented. Several Italians were present, and Marco had sat down at a table with another man, who was fat, red-faced and very fairly dressed. He had a small red mustache, and small eyes set in the middle of his puffy face, and looked like anything but an Italian.

Bob started. He remembered that the hotel-clerk had said that one of the men with whom Adam Woodman went away had been a man "with a red face and small, red mustache," and as he saw the Mulberry street Prince begin to talk rapidly with him, the boy was seized with a desire to go in himself.

"'Ello, Bob, smellin' o' ther beer?" asked a voice behind him.

Bob turned. He saw a boy of about his own size, who bore a bootblack's outfit. This suggested just the chance Bob wished.

"See yer, Mickey, I'll give ye a dollar fur ther use o' yer kit this evenin'—an' yer hat an' jacket. Is't a trade?"

Mickey looked astonished.

"W'ot fer a racket hev ye—"

"Mind yer eye, young chap; no talk or no trade. Is't a go?"

Bob displayed a silver dollar.

Mickey hesitated no longer, and the change was soon made. Bob was transformed. He had been wearing a coat big enough for two of him. Mickey's jacket fitted closely to his body, and made him look three years younger, and much smaller. The change from his cap to Mickey's slouch hat was equally effective, and even Nan might have been troubled to recognize him at first.

He lost no time, but, with his kit in place, promptly walked into the saloon. The gas had just been turned on, but the burner was a stuffy concern, which gave little light. Bob saw the Prince and the red-faced man still talking, and he got around to their rear unnoticed.

Then he made a pretense of seeking custom, but, the Italians in the place being of the lower order, failed to get a chance to "shine 'em up." So he sat down near the man he had marked and began to cautiously crack and eat peanuts, while he eagerly listened.

"I tell you there is no danger," Marco was saying.

"But Bertrand don't think so. He hurried over to my place at once and gave me a tip about the boy, and he was blamed nervous. A regular scare was onto him," the red-faced man declared.

"It was queer that the boy told him you fellows said to Woodman that you came from Bertrand. You're sure you didn't say so, aren't you?" and Marco looked a little suspiciously at his companion.

"Certainly I am. Do you take me for a fool?"

"No. But how did the boy get so near the truth?"

"It's my opinion that the old man let on to him, somewhat, and that the kid was sharp enough to put two and two together 'for four."

"Then he's sharp enough to do more mischief," said Marco, with a scowl.

"That's horse sense."

"What did you call him?"

"Bob o' the Bowery is his own chosen name."

"Describe him."

"Well, as I never saw the scamp I can't be explicit, but it seems that he's a regular ragamuffin and tough—the sort of fellow that joins a 'gang' at seventeen or eighteen, and finally winds up at the gallows, not having brains enough to play the confidence dodge. But his leading characteristic seems to be clothes fit for a man weighing a hundred and seventy; they fall all over him, and the coat, which is a frock, drags its tails nearly down to his heels."

"The devil!" ejaculated the Prince.

"Hello, what's the racket?"

"I believe I know this kid. A saucy scamp insulted me on the street only an hour or so ago, and his agility saved him a flogging. I noticed the coat in particular. Malediction, do you suppose he's spotting me?"

Marco actually seemed frightened.

"Possibly, but I reckon you don't care."

"I reckon I do. You ought to know an investigation would go hard with me. The police are dead set against the padrone system, and you know how I earn my living, Wolf."

"Don't be afraid of a beggarly imp like that kid. If he gets nasty, we'll chuck him into the East river. His miserable life sha'n't stand in the way of our present game; it's too big. Just you hold on to the old man and it'll be O. K. He won't know the girl if he sees her."

"I'm afraid of Tomaso's eyes. He's sharp, and he's just the kind of a fellow to peach."

"Fire him out then, hand-organ and all. We can't afford to—"

Just then there was a scuffle behind them, and, before they could turn, something heavy struck Wolf in the side and knocked him over, chair and all, while a small boy came down on top of him.

Arms and legs were a good deal mixed; but, if Bob o' the Bowery had not had on Mickey's jacket, the Prince of Mulberry street might have recognized the person he so much feared.

The boy detective was still on his track.

CHAPTER VI.

THE YOUNG DETECTIVE IN A CLOSE CORNER.

BOB o' the Bowery had not by any means intended to knock Mr. Lije Wolf over, nor in any way to interrupt the conversation to which he was listening so eagerly. On the contrary, the mishap was due to a sudden fight between two unknown Italians, who had lurched against the young detective so heavily that he was transformed into a missile which knocked Wolf over without any connivance on his own part.

Unluckily for Bob, Marco Gambora did not see this at once, and he sprang forward and seized the boy before he could rise, holding him in a close grip.

"What d'ye mean by this, you young whelp?" cried the Prince.

"Begorra, ye naden't be so moighty sharp on a feller," retorted Bob, breaking into a broad Irish brogue. "O'i'll throuble yez ter see dhat Oi c'u'dn't help moisilf. Wan ave dhem chaps knocked me over wid dhe butt-end ave a cyclone, an' ye kin hear dhe simmer ave it now, can't yez?"

Marco could. By this time he became aware that there was trouble in the dive, though fighting had given place to a war of words. But he looked suspiciously at Bob.

"Who are you, anyhow?"

"Bedad, Oi'm Patsy O'Connor, an' Oi'm a decent b'ye dhat shines boots fur all dhe aldermen since dhe new Board kim inter office. Divil a bit do Oi care fur politics; whin Oi git a chance ter shine 'em up, up dhe goes a-glitt'rin' loike dhe glass diamonds on dhe sthage-girruls."

"He's all right," said Wolf, laughing. "Let the kid go."

"Sha'n't Oi shine 'em up, sor?"

"Not now; see you later. You'd better git out of here; it's no place for kids."

Just then the keeper of the place approached and added the same information from an official point of view, and Bob saw that the game was up for the present. Marco Gambora looked at him suspiciously still, and seemed liable to recognize him at any time, despite the poor light and change of garments, so Bob promptly vacated the saloon.

"I've seen that boy before," said the Prince, looking after him with a thoughtful air.

"Likely as not. Such Arabs as he are all over the city, with their brushes and blacking. The young knave has a bright face, and he may grow up to be a decent man yet. He wouldn't make a bad decoy now, and with practice, might be heavy at bunco and the like," observed Wolf.

"I don't like the hound. Somehow, I think he crossed my path once— But never mind. Have a beer, Wolf?"

"Thank you—none of the Mulberry street sort for me," said Wolf, with a grin. "I don't just take to it, you see."

In the meantime, the boy detective had gone out to the street in the best of spirits. Little as he had heard of the talk between the two men, it had been enough to convince him that he was on the trail of Adam Woodman's abductors. Clearly, Lije Wolf was one of the men who had decoyed him away from the hotel.

But this was not all. One of the scamps had said that there was "no danger that the old man would see the girl." What girl? Bob remembered that Bianca, the tambourine-girl, lived in the same house which sheltered the Prince. If, as the boy suspected, Woodman was confined in that place, what was more natural than that Bianca was the girl they did not wish the old man to see?

Bob's opinion that she might be Adam's granddaughter grew stronger.

There could no longer be any doubt but Woodman had been kidnapped by Oscar Bertrand's orders, and Bob might have gone at once to the police-station had he not resolved to work up the case himself.

What would his old friend, Wrixley, the detective, say if, when he returned, the peanut-merchant had run such a clique of rogues to earth?

But what was to be the next step?

He was revolving this question in his mind when the sight of a light figure flitting through the street aroused him. It was Bianca. Without stopping to consider his impulse, he hurried forward to her side.

"Beggin' yer parding, miss," he said, politely, "kin ye tell me whar in this classic precept lives a man named Tomaso?"

Bianca looked at him with honest black eyes, though she seemed to be a little timid.

"Is he an organ-grinder?" she asked, in a musical voice.

"B'lieve that are his occerpation."

"It must be my grandfather. Did you want to see him?"

"Yas. Got important business wi' him."

"What is it?"

"It is—a—it is—that is ter observe, ter speak right ter ther p'int, I wanter see him ter—ter ax 'bout orgins."

He had found a pretext, after a desperate effort.

"You can go with me, and I'll show you where grandfather is," said Bianca, graciously.

"That'll be ther figger fur Joseph. You be pilot, an' I'll come right arter. Couldn't be in better comp'ny, by hokey!"

"Did I see you once before to-day, just before dark?"

"My classical phiz might 'a' crossed yer vision, fer sure. I'm a sort o' perambulatin' tramp, an' I show up like a comet at times. Yas, I think you did see me, some."

"We were dressed differently then."

"So I was, but I've been ter ther Metropolitan Hotel, where I hev seven rooms onter ther parlor floor, an' put on my Board o' Trade togs. I sorter like ter strike ther eye favorable w'en I make a call onter my frien's."

Bianca looked at him in a little surprise, but, as the house was by this time reached, she was turning toward the door when he stopped.

"Ef I ain't too brash, w'ot might be yer name?"

"Bianca Silva."

"Italian?"

"Yes, sir. That is, my father was Italian; my mother was an American."

"She was, hey? Sorter struck me ye had a dash o' liberty blood. W'ot was her name?"

"I don't know," replied the girl, sadly. "She ran away and married father, and then she died. I don't remember her."

"That's bad. Was yer ole man named Silva?"

"Oh! no; that is Tomaso's name. I call him grandfather, but he is not related to me. He never knew my parents either. I was brought up by a lady on Houston street. She was very good to me, if she was poor, but she was the only one who knew about me, and when she died suddenly, nobody knew who I was anyway."

"Sho! Complercated case, ain't it? Wuss'n bein' lost in Jersey swamp. Wal, I've sorter taken an int'rest in ye, an' mebbe I'll git Inspector Byrnes ter straighten ther case out. He's ther boss elocider o' Gotham, ye know, an' he's a pertic'lar friend o' mine. Used ter go ter school with him an' all ther Pinkertons, over in Bohoken."

Bianca looked at him doubtfully.

"Will you go up and see Tomaso now?" she asked.

"Yas. I may ez wal amble tharaway ef my patent-leathers won't s'ile ther carpet."

"There are no carpets in here, except Mr. Gambora's, and—and I don't see your patent-leathers, either."

"That so? Fact, by cripes. Left 'em in my parlor an' come out with tanned ox onter my feet, b'gosh. Wal, never mind; heave ahead, an' I'll be 'round yer way w'en ther supper-bell jingles."

Bianca's great eyes grew larger as she listened to Bob's remarks, but she said nothing and led the way up two flights of stairs. Everything went to show that the house was a perfect beehive, as nearly all the houses in the "Italian quarter" are, but as the owner barred rag-pickers, there were none of the tattered monuments which the Italian collector of these articles piles up in his room like breastworks.

On the top floor Bianca reached Tomaso's room. She pushed open the door and entered, and Bob promptly followed. A dim kerosene lamp burned on a rickety table, and the attic was most miserably furnished. In one corner was Tomaso's organ; before a faint fire was Tomaso, himself. He looked very much surprised at seeing Bob.

"Grandfather, here's a young man come to see you about hand-organs," explained Bianca.

"That's a straight tip. I've heerd o' you ez ther boss grinder-out o' Yankee Doodle an' 'Wait till ther Clouds Roll By,' an' I'm anxious ter git p'int from a gent who kin make ther Mulligan Guards sound ez populous an' nourishin' ez ther Star Bangled Spanner."

Tomaso looked bewildered. He had not understood half Bob said.

"You want-a know about-a hand-organs?"

"Sech was ther drift o' my stump-speech."

"You go-a into the business?"

"Clean in up ter my chin, wi' a Durham monkey right from ther Amazon, in Dutch-cheese land."

"Ah! ah! you talk-a too fast," sighed Tomaso.

"Wal, I ain't mean enough ter hurry a per-cesh, an' I'll git off my 2:10 trottin' nag an' walk wi' you. Wot I want is ter git ther straight tip outer ther orgin racket. D'ye ketch on?"

Tomaso understood to a certain degree, and, as he was a good-hearted old man, readily gave the boy all the information he could. But Bob didn't care a cent for points about organs, and he soon managed to turn the conversation on other subjects.

The old Italian professed to know nothing about Bianca. He had taken her from a charitable motive when her former protector died, and as he was very poor, had taken her on the street with him occasionally as a tambourine-girl, as he thereby made more money. He said she was as dear to him as a daughter, and the way in which the two looked at each other confirmed the idea.

"I shall never leave grandfather Tomaso," said Bianca. "Marco Gambora wants me to marry him, but I will not."

"Nur me, neither," said Bob. "Why, how old be ye?"

"Thirteen."

"Wal, I don't a'prove o' no marryin' at that age, not fer Joseph. Why, I'm 'most fifteen, an' I'm still a bachelor."

"Italian girls marry young," said Tomaso, "but Marco can't-a have Bianca. I like him-a not."

"Tis said he's a sort o' bully 'round hyar, an' makes others pay fur his grub, fine clothes an' hair-ile. The Padrone Prince, I've heerd him called."

"Ah! he is-a very powerful among the-a Italians. Of some he knows secrets, and he makes them pay-a or he will tell the police. Honest men-a he frightens, and they pay-a, too."

"He's a holy terror, ain't he?"

"Don't tell-a that I spoke of-a it!" said Tomaso, suddenly frightened.

"Not any, fer Joseph. I'm ez mum ez a mayor's clerk. But does he ever do any funny business in this hyar palace?"

"Any what?"

"Crooked biz; anything that ther law could git outer an' warm him fer, perfesh'nally?"

The old Italian shook his head.

"I know-a nothing about the Prince's affairs."

"S'pose he should ketch me hyar, an' was mad, would he shet me up hyar? Could he shet a chap up hyar an' keep him hid?"

Bob was working around to the matter which had brought him to the old house. He felt renewed confidence when he saw the organ-grinder's face grow pale and startled. The old man raised both hands deprecatingly.

"I know-a nothing—I know-a nothing!" he cried.

"Hello! hev I hit ye heavy? Mebbe Marco hez some chap shet up hyar now, eh? Ef he has, jest warble ther news ter Hannah, an' I'll reimbuss ye fer any eggspense ye're to. Come, who is shet up inter this house?"

Tomaso did not appear to hear the last words, and seemed to be looking beyond Bob o' the Bowery. Then he lifted one hand and pointed with a shaking finger, dire alarm expressed on his face.

The boy wheeled quickly.

The door had been softly opened, and on the threshold stood the Padrone Prince of Mulberry street, his swarthy face twisted into an expression of deadly fury; his glittering eyes turned on Bob like those of a veritable tiger.

CHAPTER VII.

BOB'S ROPE-WALK.

PROFOUND silence reigned for a few seconds in the room. It was clear that Gambora was in a passion, and Tomaso Silva and Bianca knew him well enough so that they were thoroughly frightened. The old organ-grinder shook like a man with palsy.

Even Bob o' the Bowery was for a moment seriously disturbed. He knew a good deal about Italians. He knew they were hot-tempered and revengeful, with an inclination to use their knives upon those they hated, and he learned enough of the Prince to be aware that he was all-powerful in the Italian quarter.

Believing that he was recognized, he knew not to what point Marco might go, and in that crowded Mulberry street house, whatever he did would probably never be known outside.

Certainly, meek old Tomaso would not dare the wrath of the Padrone Prince.

Marco's pause enabled Bob to recover his

usual "nerve," and it seemed to quiet the Prince too. When he spoke, it was quite calmly.

"So you're here," he said, looking at the boy.

"Wal, I s'pect I sorter hev that 'pearance," was the cool reply.

"Why?"

"Lookin' fur a hand-organ an' monkey."

"You lie!"

"Do I? Wal, now, sech a ree-mark ez that in ther Board o' Trade 'ud git a bloke all chawed up, but I s'pose it's O. K. in this classic precept."

"You're here as a spy."

"Sho! Go 'way! You're jokin'. Wot're ye givin' us? Wot is thar hyar ter spy at?"

"I heard what you said to Tomaso, and I know your game. I know you, too. You're the kid that thinks it's cunning to stick his nose into other people's business. I'll show you whether it is or not."

"Oh! come now, wot's r'iled up yer stumjack so mightily? B'en a-eatin' too much maccaroni, ain't ye? Pow'ful bad fer ther optic nerves, s'pecially w'en ther cholera is in France. Wot yer want is a Rochelle powder, wi' some catnip tea inter ye ez a counter-irritant."

"Boy, who sent you here?" the Prince asked, earnestly.

"I wasn't sent; I come. Malignant dispensations allays duz come. I'm an ajint fer ther S'ciety fer ther Importation o' Hoang-Ho South-down Monkeys. Kin I sell you a dozen?"

The Prince did not answer. He stepped out of the room, and then slammed the door together after him. Bob sprung forward and tried to open it. It resisted his efforts. There was no lock, but, even in that brief space of time, Gambora had in some way succeeded in fastening it. Bob ran to the window and looked out. The distance to the ground was too great to be leaped, and he saw no water-spout, or anything of the kind to help him.

He turned to the organ-grinder.

"Maccaroni hez shet us up like rats, hain't he?" was his cool comment.

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried Tomaso. "We shall all-a be killed."

"We shall? Go 'way! I ain't goin' fer ter be wiped out. Not any, fer Joseph. Ef Maccaroni thinks he kin keep a flea-blown 'Merican citizen inter this den, he's mistook."

The boy kicked lustily at the door.

"Lemme out!" he called, "or I'll put my shoulder ag'in' ther pillar an' rattle down yer hull shebang, same ez Samson did ter ther Hot-tentots. Open ther door, or you'll think ye've got a Spanish 'arthquake inter hyar. I'm a dynamite factory, an' this ere's my arternoon out."

A hand touched his shoulder, and he turned and saw Bianca.

"Be very careful, brave boy," she said. "If you go out, Marco will shoot you."

"I ain't goin' out jest yit," said Bob, with a grin. "Too many 'structions in ther way. Say, Tomaso, start up yer orgin, an' ther pelloocid moosic may bu'st ther door orf from its hinges."

"Marco knows you," persisted Bianca, "and he hates and fears you. He called you a spy. You did not come here to ask about organs. Why did you come?"

"Wal, now, b'gosh, you've got a head onter ye, haven't yer? You orter be perfessor at Yale cemetery. You'd be ther boss eloocidater o' Greek, Dutch an' Jersey dead languages. What s'pose I do tell wot fer I'm hyar! Will ye help me?"

Bianca glanced at Tomaso, but he seemed too much alarmed to hear what was said.

"I think so," she replied in a low voice.

"Wal, then, has ther Padrone got an ole man shet up hyar? I'm arter a chap from Squash Holler, with hay-seed inter his back hair—Adam Woodman, ter wit, et setry. He's a full-blooded Yankee right from ther clam-chowder deestricks o' Connecticut, but he's a protegee o' mine. Hev ye see'd any sech giraffe hung onter Maccaroni's watch-chain fer a charm?"

"I think there is such an old gentleman in Persida's room."

"Who's Persida?"

"She's Marco's helper."

"Oh! she is? Wal, I wanter see ther old chap, right bad. Whar's Persida's parler?"

"On the floor below, at the rear."

"Co'reck. Wot's ther winder jest under yourn?"

"It opens from the hall."

"Um! Wal, I'm goin' that way ef you please."

"How can you?" and Bianca's eyes opened widely.

"I'll take that thar rope, tie one end ter ther bed-post, an' then go down one floor. See?"

Bob had deftly adjusted the rope as he spoke.

He then threw open the window. All the street lamps were lit, but Mulberry street was unusually quiet. He hoped no one would observe him dangling in mid-air. He paused and looked at Tomaso.

"Good-by, ole pard," he said, genially.

"Sorry I can't close no bargain 'bout orgins this eve, but I'll see you ag'in. Ef Maccaroni cuts up rusty, report ter me at City Hall. Bianca, you're a brick fit ter be in a church. I jist cotton ter ye like a cinder ter a brakeman's eye. Will see ye all later. Don't call a colored domestic fer ter show me out; I kin find the door-mat."

He skipped out of the window in what seemed a reckless way, and his venture was certainly a reckless one. If he fell to the sidewalk he would probably never see another Christmas. But he did not intend to fall. He could climb like a sailor, and his plan, which would have been impossible of execution to any ordinary person, seemed easy enough to him.

It proved to be so. He slid down with a strong grasp on the rope until he reached the window below, and then, resting his feet on the projection, tried the lower sash. It was not fastened, and easily arose.

He chuckled, swung inside, let go the rope, and was one floor nearer the ground.

He was now in a hall reaching the width of the house. A light burned at the head of the stairway, but it was a feeble kerosene affair, and it would not have been easy to recognize a person in the hall. Bob heard the buzz of voices on both sides of the hall, but no one was visible.

"Now fer Persida's room an' ole Adam," he thought. "I s'pose ef Maccaroni gits his awful grip onter me, ther peanut trade'll lose its solar cistern, but no Bowery boy don't knuckle ter Mulberry street this week; not fer Joseph!"

Despite the boy's grasp on the subject, he did not fully comprehend his danger. He had, as yet, found no one who could, and dared, tell him what Marco Gambora was to the Italian colony, or how many dark deeds were suspected of being due to his merciless work.

The Prince had not won his title solely by wearing good clothes.

"Cricky! I wish Stumpy was hyar. He wouldn't car' a sour peanut fer all ther Maccaronis, an' ef they cut up rough he'd wipe ther floor all clean wi' 'em, four rounds, Marquis o' Queensberry an' Paddy Ryan rules. Beats all creation wot a 'terrible left' that air Stumpy has got."

With this tribute to his warlike partner, Bob glided along the hall. He believed he had succeeded in locating the "rear room" said to be occupied by Persida, and he desired to learn if Adam Woodman was really there. So he walked cautiously forward.

After advancing a few steps he saw that the door was open, and his face fell. He went nearer and saw a wrinkled-up old Italian woman brooding over a fire, but there was no one else in the room.

A step sounded on the stairs, and Bob got into a dark corner as soon as possible. A man came up and, not observing the boy, walked into the room.

"Ah! where is-a your lodger, Persida?" he asked.

"Gone," returned the woman, tersely.

"Gone?"

"Yes. The Prince took-a fright, and-a has carried the man off in a hurry."

"The dickens he hez!" muttered Bob. "By cripes, I'm too late!"

"Where has he-a taken him?"

"I know-a not, but wait and-a you shall see. The Prince will soon be-a back. He has a boy up-stairs that wants attention."

"What boy?"

"Some-a one who has spied upon him. The Prince is frightened. He-a fears discovery, and-a then he would suffer, while all the-a others would go free."

"Trust Marco to save himself. If there is a spy after him-a, the Prince will-a kill him."

"Not this week, he won't," muttered Bob.

"I'll slide out while slidin' is good. Ole Adam hez b'en taken away, hay-seed an' all, an' ef I stay hyar I'll git knifed in reg'lar Maccaroni style. That wouldn't sot wal on my inner man—not for Joseph."

Before he had thought all this he was on his way down-stairs. He went softly, and no one appeared to molest him, so he was soon on the street.

"Ther jig is up fur ther present, fer sartin sure," he thought. "Ole Adam hez teen taken ter another place o' which deponent knows nothin'. I've got ter begin all over, an' pipe ther case new. First o' all, I s'pect I'd better

git home an' sleep a few dozen o' revivin' winks. I feel ther need o' a Brussels mattress an' hoss-hair carpet. Good-by, Prince Maccaroni; I'll see ye w'en ther sun goes down."

Walking nimbly, he soon left Mulberry street, but had not reached his humble quarters when the sight of two men just ahead engaged in a war of fists aroused his interest in pugilism. He ran toward them, and, as the street was quiet and deserted by all, policemen not excepted, chanced to be the only witness of the affair.

"Hello!" he said, aloud. "I know one o' them pile-drivers; it's Crow McGookin, ther Terror, an'— Great Scott! I'll eat my patent-leathers ef t'other ain't Gus Redding, ther chap that 'ud marry Helena Abbott ef Oscar, ther dude, hadn't got ther inside track. Whew!"

CHAPTER VIII. THE ITALIAN SAILOR.

BOB was right. One of the gentlemen was he who had taken the boy's part so valiantly on Fourteenth street, when Oscar Bertrand made the accusation of pocket-picking, and just as the Bowery lad realized this, Redding sent in a scientific blow which laid Mr. Crow McGookin over in the gutter.

When he regained his feet he unceremoniously took to his heels and disappeared around the corner.

"Wal done, by cricky! Ye did that bloke up brown, in style fit fur John L., ther slugger. Ye'e a rattler from Rattle-bang, you be. Don't know but one chap in York that kin beat ye, an' him is Stumpy, my pardner. He's jest a pile-driver on stilts w'en he gits down ter solid work."

The gentleman had been waiting for a chance to speak.

"So this is you, my young friend?"

"S'pect it's w'ot is left onter me. I ain't nobody else. Don't see nothin' in my class'cal featur's ter mind ye o' Jay Gould or Adrian Hitt, ther prize walkist, do ye?"

"Nothing. So Bertrand hasn't had you arrested yet?"

"Not any fer Joseph."

"He did not think you took that purse?"

"Jest my idee o' fried rattlesnakes. But *why* did he go fer ter injure my repootation ez a man 'bout town?"

"That's what I have vainly asked myself. He knew you were innocent, so why did he pounce upon you?" musingly asked Redding. "My only explanation is that he selected you because he was anxious to have the theft fastened on some one."

"By Chri'mus!"

"What now?"

"Why, it nat'rally follers that he—Oscar, ther dude, his own personal, sole self—was ther pockpicket. Course he war, an' ez he hed ther leather in his pocket when 'twas diskivered missin', that was w'y he wanted a victim."

"Not so fast. Remember he is a rich man, and that Miss Abbott is his future wife. Why should he steal a few beggarly dollars from her?"

"W'ot else besides money was inter ther pocket-book?"

"That I don't know."

"Wal, I'm goin' ter find out."

"You are? How?"

"By axin' Miss Abbott. I 'low that Oscar, ther dude, stole ther leather, not fur ther boodle inter it, but fer some other article. Me an' ther dude ain't pals by seven miles, an' I'm arter him heavy. Say, it's mighty odd Miss Abbott cottons ter him when sech a white man ez you 're a candidate fer ther orifice o' ice-cream beau."

Redding smiled.

"You seem to have a good opinion of me, but, so far as Bertrand is concerned, ther engagement is an old family matter, and I'm not sure but the lady is anxious to recede from it. Oscar seems to have that fear, and is jealous of me. I believe this recent assault is due to him. He would like to see my name paraded in the papers as having been in a drunken row, which would probably be the way the reporters would hash it up, for sensation, if I had come to grief. Luckily, I was too much for the ruffian."

"Right you are, boss. You laid his nibs out fer keeps. But, look out; Crow McGookin is a bad 'un, an' ef he kin git a lick at ye on yer blind side, he'll do it an' never turn a hair."

"Thank you for your warning; and now I'll leave you, as I am in a hurry. Good-night."

Redding shook Bob's none-too-clean hand cordially, and then turned and walked rapidly away.

"He's a good one from his big toe ter his bump o' weneration, an' I'd like him for a pard."

I's about ter tell him w'ot I know 'bout Adam, o' Squash Holler, but I must postpone it till a more orspicious 'cashun."

The boy walked on, but his adventures were not yet over. He soon arrived where a policeman was bending over a man who lay on the sidewalk. Bob's first idea was that the "member of the finest" had been using his club, but this was not so. He was supporting the unknown with care and kindness.

"How was ye hurt?" asked the policeman.

"Fell off an Express train-a," replied a thick voice.

"Do ye mane a street-car?"

"No; I said an Express train-a."

"Who are yez, onyhow, me b'ye!"

"I'm a sailor. Look-a at my arm, and-a you'll see a chain and-a anchor."

"What is dhe name ave yer vessel?"

"She didn't have-a any."

"Bless me soul, he's clane gone in dhe hi'd ave him," observed the officer. "Oi ixpect he fell off ave a care, or rin afoul ave wan o' dhe gangs."

"He's Italian, hain't he?" Bob asked.

All the replies of the injured man had been thick, slow and absently spoken, but he now seemed to revive suddenly.

"Si, si!" he explained. "Italy—Venice—a son of the sea. Take me to Bianca!"

"Hey?" cried Bob. "Bianca? Who's she? Do ye know Tomaso Silva, o' Mulberry street?"

"Bianca? I know only Bianca!"

The man had relapsed into his old sluggish manner, and the patrolman shook his head.

"No use," he said. "He's got a fracture ave dhe skull, or some sich throuble. I'll have to—Begorra, here's the roundsman!"

A roundsman was indeed approaching, and when he had failed to make the man talk intelligibly, an ambulance was summoned and he was taken to the hospital. Bob remained near until he was taken away, and then pursued his former course.

"Wish I knowed all about that chap. So he wanted fer ter see 'Bianca,' did he? Now, lemme argue ther case. Ther friend o' Adam's Italian son-in-law, who sent ther paper ter Adam so he c'ud find his granddarter, was an Italian sailor. This chap is an Italian sailor. I think Adam's granddarter is Bianca, ther tambourine-pounder. This man wanted ter see 'Bianca.' Now, I'll bet a pint o' peanuts ag'in' City Hall that this hyer is jest the same chap. I'll keep on thinkin' so till I git at the rights o' this case, an' git at 'em I will ef I bu'st my broadcloth Prince Albert!"

Bob o' the Bowery was up at an early hour the following morning, and, after eating something, he had a social talk with Stumpy, his warlike partner, and then walked briskly toward the Bowery. He paused short of that point, however, and, entering a house, found his red-haired girl-friend, Nan, washing dishes.

"Hullo, Queen Vic!" was his salutation.

"Makin' ther royal china shine like a dude's eye-glasses, ain't ye?"

"Dudes orter know," retorted the girl, giving her dish-cloth a flourish.

"I s'pect you're an authority on them cattle," said Bob, placidly, "though I never knowed afore whar yer silks an' satins come from."

"You was goin' ter send me 'round a diamond this mornin'. Whar is it?"

"T'won't be hyar afore noon. 'Twas so heavy it broke down Adams's Express wagon, an' Adams has got ter go over inter Brooklyn an' borror another vehighele. But this ain't biz, an' biz is w'ot I come onter. D'ye wan't a job?"

"Ain't I got a job?"

"Go 'way! I mean, onter ther detective force."

"Yas, an' I want a thousand dollars. Mebbe you kin git 'em both fer me," retorted Nan.

"Nary thousand; I voted ther wrong ticket fer mayor. But see yere, Nan; no foolishin' now. I want ye ter do some biz. I want a man watched. He's got two eyes in his head, an' is sharp ez ther rail ter a hoss-car, an' ef I pipe him he'll tumble. But he won't s'pect no gal ter be on that lay."

"W'ot's inter it?" thoughtfully asked Nan, pausing with a plump hand on each side of the dish-pan.

"Thar's a boodle, but I can't say how much ter a figger."

"W'ot fer d'ye want him piped? I hope ye ain't j'ined a gang, Bob, an' gone ter ther bad. I've knowed ye ever sence we was young, an' I'd hate ter hear it on ye. 'Sides, I don't help ter git no innercent man inter ther hands o' sharpers."

The girl spoke earnestly. Her light manner

had disappeared, and it was plain that a good and honest heart beat under the ill-fitting, ragged dress she wore. Her gray eyes looked reproachfully out at Bob from under her wild, red hair which, regardless of fashion, would wave and crimp whether or no.

"Great Scott! w'at be ye talkin' about?" demanded the young detective. "D'ye take me ter be a Thug? See anything 'bout me that resembles a river-pirate? Does my classic mug look like a bunco-steerer's? S'pect I'm a travelin' agent fur some Fagin? Not any, fer Joseph. I'm a perivate detective, an' about ter 'stablish a bureau in orposition ter Pinkerton's. Ax Inspector Byrnes."

"That'll do, Bob. I reckon ye're all straight, an' hope ye won't hold ill-will 'cause I spoke right out," said honest Nan.

"Not any, fer Joseph?" replied Bob, heartily; and then he gave her such points as he saw fit about Adam Woodman's second disappearance; adding that her work was to dog Marco Gambora and try to learn where he had taken the old man.

His idea that the Padrone Prince would not think of suspecting a small girl to be a spy was a good one, and Nan entered into the scheme, with zeal.

This matter being settled, Bob left the house and started off on another errand he had in his mind, but not far had he gone when he heard his name called. Turning, he saw a fine private carriage in the street, and from the open window Helena Abbott was beckoning him to approach.

CHAPTER IX.

CONFIRMATION OF BOB'S SUSPICIONS.

BOB was surprised, but not in the least inclined to decline the invitation. Miss Abbott looked pleasant, kind and gracious, and her treatment of him in the past had quite won the boy's heart. He went promptly toward the carriage, and took off his cap politely—he had "swapped back" with Patsy, the bootblack, and now wore his usual suit, with the long coat which dangled almost to his heels.

"Good-morning," said Miss Abbott. "Would you like to ride?"

"Et costs five cents on a keer, onless we kin spot a bob-tail an' hook on behind," explained the young detective.

"Nonsense! I'm not talking about cars; I mean in this carriage, with me," she replied.

"W'ot, me git in thar?"

"Certainly."

"You're givin' me taffy."

"Oh! you perverse creature. See! The door is open—will you come in?"

"Will I? D'ye s'pose I refuse orifice when it's offered? Not any, fer Joseph. In I gits, though w'ot fer I don't know, ez I'm neither useful ner swell. But ther kerriage is swell, an' so be you, an' mebbe you want me fur a terrible egg-sample."

By this time they were in motion. Bob had settled back on the elegant cushions, and was very much at his ease, though he carefully kept his muddy shoes away from Miss Abbott's fine dress.

"I have been looking for you," she explained. "I went first to where you said your store was—why, the 'store' is only a peanut stand, Robert—and your partner, Mr. Stumpy, directed me—"

"Ha! ha! ha!"

Bob burst into explosive laughter which surprised and rather startled Helena.

"Why do you laugh?" she asked.

"Oh! it's too rich for even Astor House soup. 'Mister' Stumpy! Gosh all baked peanuts, wouldn't he smole a smile ter hear that. 'Mister' Stumpy! Now, ef you's ter call me Mister it'd be all right, but Stumpy is sech a tough an' bruiser. Say, miss, what was that awful boy doin'? Did ye see any headless bodies, or bodyless heads, loafin' 'round nigh him? Was he lickin' Tim, the bootblack, or Ned, ther chap that sells ther one-hoss papers? Did ye see any ambulances or bone-doctors holdin' up ther hamp-post? In brief, was Stumpy settin' up a hospittle 'round thar?"

"No, sir, he was not, and I believe you wrong him by giving him such a character. He don't look in the least like a fighting boy. I believe you are the hard boy of the firm. But, never mind this; I want to ask you a question, and I want a serious answer."

"You shall hev it, miss," declared Bob, abandoning his levity at once.

"Do you know you created a commotion at Oscar Bertrand's house when you called there?"

"Did I? What fur?"

"You made some singular statements; statements which they denied in every particular. You left the impression that Mr. Bertrand had kidnapped his grandfather."

"Wasn't aweer o' that. I knowed I tuk ther impression thar, but I tho't I tuk it away with me, too. So I really left it, did I?"

"You know what I mean. Now, how much of your story was true?" Miss Abbott earnestly asked.

Bob winked several times before he ventured to answer. How far could he trust Bertrand's lady-love? He was anxious to get in a blow at Oscar, and at the same time help Gus Redding, but it would not do to be rash.

"Come, you can trust me," the lady added.

"What ef I should sorter dim Oscar's luster?"

"I only ask that you tell the truth."

"You're to marry him."

"Am I? I'm not so sure of that!" Helena retorted.

"Oh! ye needn't ter please me, fer ther fact is, me an' Oscar don't jest cotton ter each other, we don't. Adam didn't like him neither. He said, Adam did, that the Bertrands was holler, mean, dec'itful, treacherous, an' was arter his money."

"Did he say that?"

"Every word on't."

"What about Mr. Woodman's granddaughter, the little girl?"

"W'ot little girl?" craftily asked Bob.

"Why, Mr. Bertrand's cousin."

"Oh! I think I ketch yer meanin'. W'ot about her? Wal, that's jest what Adam'd like ter know. Kin you give any p'int?"

"No. I only know that there is such a girl, but do not know where she is. The Bertrands don't know either."

"Did they tell you so?"

"Yes."

"I'll bet my silk tile ag'in' a church that they lie."

"Dear me, why do you think so?"

"From 'pearances. Now, I take you ter be about ez squar' ez they usually build folkses, an' I don't mind givin' ye a few items. Ye see, Adam hez got a boodle ter leave ter some 'un, ef he does hail from ther rooral deestriks. W'ot he hankers fer is ter make ther kid his heir, but he 'lows as how ther Bertrands is goin' fur his poultry-farm red-hot, detarmined ter shet ther gal out. An' I s'pect Adam is right, too, an' that's why Oscar, ther dude, has kidnapped onter ther ole gent."

"Has he kidnapped him?"

"S my opinion he hez."

"Did the men who took Mr. Woodman away from the hotel say that they came from Mr. Bertrand?"

"No. They wouldn't be so jolly green as that. But ye see I was onter ther racket, an' I give it ter Oscar that way jest ter see how it'd hit him. Mebbe you recollect how it *did* hit him. He got red an' white, an' was mightily flustered."

Miss Abbott was watching the boy carefully, giving due heed to every word, and was much interested.

"In plain words," she said, "you think it is Mr. Bertrand's scheme to keep the little girl from inheriting the old gentleman's money?"

"K'rect ter a six-spot die."

"Then he is an unscrupulous villain!" was the energetic comment, and Helena's eyes sparkled with indignation.

"Jess my erpinion, b'gosh!"

The Bowery boy began to suspect that Miss Abbott had sought this interview with the sole object of satisfying certain doubts she entertained regarding Bertrand, and Bob was not slow to help along the suspicion, hoping to thereby better the chances of his friend, Gus Redding.

But when the lady tried to get all the details of the case, our young friend was not so communicative. Pleasant as Miss Abbott seemed, she *might* be a spy for Bertrand, and Bob kept his points to himself like a veteran detective.

While they talked the carriage had rolled up Broadway, passed around Union Square and returned on its own track. It was plainly the intention to leave the peanut-merchant where he had been taken up, but he anticipated matters and, just as they passed Great Jones street, suddenly expressed a desire to get out.

He was accommodated; the carriage turned and passed rapidly up Broadway, and then Bob dodged into Bond street.

"Thar they be!" he muttered.

He referred to two men who were passing along ahead of him, and whom he had recognized as Oscar Bertrand and Crow McGookin. He had seen them from the carriage window,

and it was no wonder he longed to be on their track.

That he could follow them many minutes unobserved was not probable, and he was pleased when, after turning one or two corners, they had entered a saloon. Still, how was he to hear what they said? The trick by which he had spied upon the Prince and his friends would not work in this case, for no Patsy was at hand to loan his implements for a "shine."

One thing was in Bob's favor. The day was warm, and the heavy saloon doors had been thrown open, leaving only swinging screen-doors. He promptly peered between the slats of these.

What he saw rather surprised him.

Bertrand and McGookin had sat down at a table close at hand, and with them was Mr. Lije Wolf.

Then it flashed upon the boy detective that in Wolf and McGookin he saw the two men who had decoyed Woodman away from the hotel. The clerk's description had not been full, but they answered it as far as it went.

"I'm onter 'em!" was his terse comment.

Next, he discovered that the three men were so near the screen doors that he could overhear what they said, and he stood still and listened. As long as no other customer passed in or out, and his legs were not observed below the screen, he was safe from notice.

"I confess I was somewhat nervous," said Bertrand, "and I wanted to know just how matters were going."

"Well, as Oi told yez," said McGookin, "Oi failed wid Redding. He used his fists loike a Sullivan."

"We will attend to him later. Let me hear Wolf's report. Is this new cage for Woodman secure?"

"All O. K.," returned Lije. "It's solid, and the best of it is no one will think of looking for him there. If the boy blows to the police, and they believe his yarn—which is not likely, for such kids don't get much credence from the cops—they will naturally suppose that, since Prince Marco is in the game, the old man is still in the Italian quarter."

"Well, I'm glad he is out of it."

"Oh! he's secure enough," declared Wolf.

"And his jailers are faithful?"

"Yes; I'll go bail on that."

"I want you to caution Gambora to look out for that boy. I've seen him, and I dread him more than I would a detective. He's got an eye like a needle, and there is no one sharper than a New York street boy. Tell the Prince to make sure he isn't dogged by him."

"How about Nan?" mentally questioned Bob o' the Bowery, with a wink.

"The Prince will use due care. Besides, McGookin and I will soon dispose of the kid," Wolf asserted.

"Attend to it as soon as possible. Next, what of the girl, this Bianca? Does she suspect?" Bertrand asked.

"Not a thing. She's a simple little creature, considering the wild life she has led, and don't imagine that the noble blood of the Connecticut gentleman flows in her plebeian veins."

The three men laughed at this compressed wit.

"Well, keep your eye on her," said Bertrand, buttoning his coat. "If she should disappear from our sight it would complicate matters. Look after all these points, men, and I won't spare money. As for me, I must not be seen in this locality too much. I'll take a Broadway stage and go up-town."

The trio had arisen, and Bob promptly beat a retreat to avoid discovery. He was in high spirits.

"I've got onter this O. K. Bianca is the heir o' Adam, jest ez I thort, an' ther hull racket is illoominated by a 'lectric light. Now, it only remains ter hunt Adam up ag'in, and rescue him from ther inemy."

CHAPTER X.

THE PADRONE'S PROPOSITION.

THE Padrone Prince was walking along the street. Men and women looked at him with awe. He had made himself a power in Mulberry street, but not a valued one. If an Italian committed a misdemeanor in the meaning of law, Marco Gambora was soon aware of it, and from that time he held the man in his power, and, however scanty the man's earnings, he had to contribute to the fund which kept the Prince in idleness and good clothes; and if the criminal was the father of children, the latter were, in some cases, taken by the Prince and sent out to beg on the streets for him.

Such being the case, Marco was not loved by

his countrymen in general, but he kept the greater part of the hard characters in the colony on his side, and no one dared revolt.

The city authorities had from time to time set a heavy foot on the padrone system as practiced in the Italian quarter, but Marco's career had been comparatively brief, and so far he had escaped molestation.

On the present occasion he paused when he reached a certain house, hesitated a moment, and then entered without ceremony. He ascended two flights of stairs, and then abruptly opened a door and entered.

He saw a rough attic room at oneside of which Bianca sat, sewing. She started up at sight of him, her face assuming a frightened look.

"Don't rise, fair Bianca," said the Padrone, airily. "Keep your seat, and let us forget the difference in our worldly stations and meet simply as friends."

"Tomaso is not in," faltered Bianca.

"I am aware of the fact. I saw him going away with his organ. So you stay at home to-day and act the frugal housekeeper?"

"I—I am sewing."

"So I can see," laughed Marco. "Well, I am glad to see we meet as friends. I come to say that I am sorry for my hasty course last night. I ought not to have driven you out of the house, but I blamed you for not preventing the escape of that boy, and my hot temper carried me too far. Gladly will I receive you back in my house, and, in any case, I beg your pardon for driving you out, Bianca. How I could do so to one I admire so much as you, I don't know."

"I—I— We are doing very well here, and think we shall stay," said the poor child, looking toward the door in the vain hope that some one would appear to rescue her from this interview.

"Perhaps you may as well until we are married," said the Prince, blandly.

"Oh! sir, don't speak of that. Forgive me, but I cannot think of being married. I am not yet fourteen years old."

"Aren't other girls marrying at that age every day about us?" demanded Marco.

There was truth in what he asserted. The Italians of Mulberry street have made themselves notorious by their early marriages; a practice which seems no less than actual crime to our American minds. Gambora was not proposing a solitary case. The daily press records frequent instances where girls who are mere children go before some qualified magistrate, accompanied by their misguided parents, to take a step which seems to us to be like placing April where August belongs.

Frightened Bianca could find no words with which to reply to the last argument.

"Now, let me talk plain common-sense," continued the Padrone. "You are half American, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You don't know who were your parents?"

"No, sir."

"What if I find them, or, at least, your relatives, and place you among kind friends?"

The girl looked at him sharply.

"Do you know who they are?"

The Prince laughed.

"Soft and slowly. I want my reward fixed before I tell too much. Suppose I find relatives for you who are kind and rich? Suppose I make you a fine lady, with silk dresses, diamonds, and all the money you could spend—and a carriage and two black horses, to drive through the Park. How would that suit you?" Marco chuckled, as though he believed the picture to be irresistible, but Bianca was not so much impressed.

"I guess they don't care much for me, or they would come and get me."

"What if they don't know where you are?"

"Then you ought to tell them."

Gambora laughed.

"So I will when you marry me."

"I'm not going to marry you, and you needn't say anything more about it," was the spirited reply.

"Ah! Do you know what becomes of people who make me angry?"

Bianca's rosy cheeks paled.

"I can't help it," she faltered.

"You must and shall. Come, I am giving you a chance to leave poverty and be a fine lady. All it costs you is to take me along with you. I'm going, too. We won't say anything more about this now, but I'll give you time to think about it. I feel sure that you will come to your senses soon, and agree to please me. If you say yes, I will take care of you, treat you kindly, and give you all the fine clothes and

jewelry you can wear. If you refuse, beware, for my hand is heavy. What do they call me in Mulberry street?"

"The Padrone Prince."

"Never mind the 'Padrone' part," said Marco, frowning. "That is a slander from my enemies, who hate me because I have more authority than they in the Italian quarter. If I were in sunny Italy, I should be a real prince. What do you think of that?"

"I should think you would go there, then," was the straightforward reply.

Marco winced.

"Never mind that, but just recollect who and what I am, and that I am willing to share all these honors with you. But I must go now. Farewell!"

And the rascally Prince went out. He descended to the street, looked sharply each way, but, seeing no one who looked like a spy, sauntered on down the street. He did not notice a small, red-haired girl, in a ragged dress, who followed close behind with an aimless, listless air.

Could he have seen the glitter of her bright eyes, he might not have been so indifferent.

The small girl was Nan, and she was wide-awake.

"Go on," she muttered, "but I'm onter ye, an' ef thar's a light inter ther winder fer ye, I'm goin' ter find it. Bowery Bob's detective corpse is alive an' kickin'!"

Gambora passed what is known as the "Italian quarter," and entered a two-story, ill-looking building. A sour-looking woman answered his ring at the bell, and he was promptly admitted.

"Well, what is the good word?" he asked.

"The old man is here, all safe," the woman answered.

"Does he cut up roughly?"

"Not in the least. He's as dignified as a preacher, and says he'll stay there until the walls crumble down before he'll yield a point."

"He'd better wait until he's asked," said Gambora, with a scowl. "I am dictating, not requesting, terms."

"He threatens to use the law freely when he gets out."

"Let him threaten. He won't get out until his hands are so bound with events that it will be to his interest to sing soft and slow. You are sure he cannot escape?"

"Perfectly sure."

"Well, keep your door locked, and don't let any one in."

"So I do; but what if the coppers should come?"

"They won't come; there is no reason why they should suspect this place."

The Padrone spoke confidently; but he did not wholly forget Bob o' the Bowery. He really feared that young man a good deal, and his performance at the other house had shown that he possessed great nerve.

"You just be faithful to me," he added, "and you shall never regret it. I have got a little scheme of my own on foot, which may give me all the cherries on the tree, and if I win the prize, those who are faithful to me will get well paid."

The woman's eyes glittered with cupidity, and she promised to be faithful, but their conversation was interrupted by a peculiar *twang*! and, turning, they saw a knife sticking in the wall near Gambora, the handle still quivering from the force with which it had been sped.

The Padrone, who had seen a good deal of juggling work, realized the fact that it had been thrown by a skilled hand. No amateur could have done work like that.

From the handle dangled a paper, tied on with a string, and he mutely picked it off. This is what he read:

"GAMBORA:—Beware, for your sins are recolling on your own head. Padrones are not wanted here, and, before many hours, you will be a dead man."

"THE KNIFE-BRAVO."

The woman had read this over Marco's shoulder, and she now spoke quickly:

"Believe me, Mr. Gambora, I am not in this game, nor have I any idea who threw the knife."

"I believe you," said Marco, coolly. "The weapon is of Italian make, and the thrower was doubtless one of my own countrymen. What American could have hurled it so?"

"A little more and it would have taken your life. It came like a shot, point first."

"Some low and treacherous Italian whom I have offended is after revenge. It is nothing, my good woman; such things are common in my own country."

The Prince spoke lightly, but he had as yet had no desire to visit the open window at the

rear of the house through which the knife had, of course, been flung.

It was not until the course was suggested by the woman that he went, and then there was no sign of the unknown.

This revived Marco's spirits and he talked still more lightly of the incident, but he did not by any means forget it. He knew the way of his countrymen well. The knife is the favorite weapon of Italy, and many of its people do not hesitate to use it freely to wipe out a quarrel.

The way in which this particular knife had been used—thrown, not thrust—showed that the "Knife-Bravo" was even more dangerous than the majority of his race, and when the Prince left the house he scanned closely each person he met and felt anything but at his ease.

CHAPTER XI.

AFFAIRS TAKE A BAD TURN.

BOB o' the Bowery did not lose much time after leaving the vicinity of the saloon, but made his way toward where Nan lived, to see if the girl had succeeded in tracking Gambora. She was watching for him, and came rushing through the alley to meet him, her red hair flying in the wind.

"Hello!" quoth Bob, "I didn't know afore that you was a go-as-you-please ped. Better hire Madison Square Garding an' give an exhibition trot fer gate-money. Reckon ther dudes would turn out more'n they do ter a-sluggin' matinee."

"You wouldn't be thar then," she retorted.

"Why not?"

"'Cause you're so homely you'd scare ther chaps that keeps ther score up."

"Ef they could stand you, I reckon one more 'fiction wouldn't bush 'em teetotally. But this ain't biz. How's ther detective racket?"

"Boss."

"Tis, hey? Hev ye see'd Maccaroni?"

"Yas; an' I've spotted his new crib, too. W'en he went thar he jest looked 'round wise ez a copper arter a nap, but, lawsee, thar was only me, a-lookin' like a red-headed innercent, an' he never s'pected I was a-pipin' him."

Nan's jolly face expanded into a smile as she renewed her recollection of the affair.

"B'gosh, ef this proves ter be true, I'll make ye a present of a coupe and four Maud S. trotters, wi' silver door-plates all over the harness. I s'pect to be a'pointed postmaster next month, an' then I'm goin' ter make ther dollars hum. But whar is ther new crib w'ot Maccaroni thinks 'll hold ole Adam?"

Nan gave the street and number, adding the details of her little piece of detective work, much to the boy's admiration.

"Couldn't 'a' did better myself. You've got a heap o' sense, ef you hev red hair. W'en I gits inter ther Legislature I'll interdooce a bill in favor o' votin' privilege fer all women with a strawberry blonde cast o' complex, I will."

"Better wait till ye git thar."

"Oh! I'll git thar, ef walkin' ain't too bad. I've got a big pull in this ward sence my man, Hannibawl Julius O'Tooter was elected ter stay at home. But this ain't biz. I'm goin' over ter see that dive whar ole Adam is shet up inter."

He went, and surveyed the house carefully, front and rear—for an alley enabled him to do the latter. He learned little by it. All the windows were closed, and nearly all the blinds, and the doors were grimly in place.

That they were locked he was satisfied, though he did not venture to try them.

"Ere's a go. This hyar looks like a reg'lar house o' silence an' blood-curdlin' mystery on ther half-shell, an' ez Marco hez see'd my way o' droppin' in 'thout an invite, at t'other crib, 'tain't likely he's left any loop-hole here. 'Spect it'll be hard fer ter git in. Wonder w'ot ther copper would say ef I give him a straight tip 'bout this biz?"

He had regained the main street, and was looking wishfully at a blue-coated guardian of the peace. That august gentleman looked fat and happy, and Bob decided to try him.

He did so.

"See yer, mister, w'ot's ther proper caper when a 'spectable 'Merican citz is shet up inter captivity?"

The guardian looked jovially down from his lofty height, smiling with amusement at sight of the small boy in the long coat.

"I should say it would be best fer him to get out mit himself at once," he replied.

"S'posen he couldn't git out?"

"Then I suppose he vould haf to stay in mit hisself."

"That air may be ther butt-end o' logic,"

replied Bob; "but 'tain't jestice—not fer Joseph. See yer! D'ye observe that palatial moniment o' brick yander?"

"I can see it mit von eye, my poy."

"Wal, thar's an ole gent from Squash Holler, wi' hay-seed inter his hair, inter that 'ere crib, held fast pris'ner. Now, ain't it the proper caper fer ter git him out?"

"Vrom Hosh Squaller, you say mit yer tongue?" asked the officer, with a wink.

"I sart'inly spoke with my tongue, but I didn't say Hosh Squaller," Bob declared, with dignity. "I said Squash Holler. He's a gent from Connecticut, with tin an' sparklers, he is, an' something orter be did fer him."

"Now, you see here, leedle poy, dot vas played out," and the guardian shook his club at him playfully. "Poys will haf ther joke, an' I don't plame them, but dot game is too old. You run away an' blay marbles, an' don't come foolish-ing round mit me some more dimes at all. My eyes vas open to your games!"

And the officer walked on, believing himself the "flyest" man on the force.

"Jest w'ot I s'pected," muttered Bob. "Them chaps don't take no stock in boys, nohow. S'pect they was thirty years old when they was borned. W'ot's ther use o' tryin' ter rescue Adam outer bondage? Nobody won't give me a lift. Reckon I'd better give it up an'— No, by cripes, I don't. I'll keep on an' win ther game, an' then I reckon I kin crack my heels an' git ther laugh onter them. I'll do it! Yas, I'll see ole Adam outer his scrape, ef I hev ter go down ther chimbley like a cyclone an' rip things up. Hello! that sorter gives me an idee!"

Not wishing to be observed near the house, he had been walking away while talking. His new idea was a shrewd one in many ways, but it required a confederate, and that, too, one of mature years, and he was not sure whom he could get.

By means of careful thought he finally arrived at a decision, however, and his face brightened perceptibly. He increased his speed, and was hurrying along when he was accosted by a boy of about his own age.

"Hello, Bob!" said Teddy O'Fee.

"Hello!" responded Bob, gruffly, for he did not exactly admire the youthful O'Fee.

"I've got a letter fer you."

"Got my grandmother's will?" retorted Bob.

"W'ot game be you inter now?"

"I ain't inter none. I met a silk-tile chap over on ther Bowery, nigh yer stand, an' he axed me did I know Bob o' ther Bowery, an' when I 'lowed I did, he gi'n me this hyar ter bring ye ther letter."

Teddy exhibited a silver quarter, and also the letter, and Bob lost his suspicions and took the letter. He was not long in reading these lines:

"YOUNG BOB:—I want to see you concerning the old matter, and as I have business to-day at No. — Crosby street, will you oblige me by coming there if you get this note before six o'clock? Perhaps I'll put you in the way of earning a V. Don't fail me!"

"GUS REDDING."

This seemed to Bob to be all that was necessary. He liked Gus, and was not only willing to oblige him, but the promised V was not to be slighted. He left O'Fee hastily and walked toward Crosby street. He soon reached the house mentioned in the note.

It was a respectable-looking building, but Bob had no sooner seen it than he experienced a doubt. Not that the house was to be blamed for it, but natural caution suggested that all might not be as it seemed.

What if the note was a decoy? He was in the way of Bertrand, Gambora and their comrades, and they knew it; he had even heard them make threats against him.

Perhaps Gus Redding had never penned any such note, but that it was the work of the clique before mentioned. The fact that Redding should be in such a humble house was in itself suspicious, but Bob remembered that his friend really had been near there the previous night, and that he had said there was more work for him to do in the vicinity.

"Still, ther Murray Hill dude may hev writ this letter, an' I don't perpose ter run my head inter no rat-trap. Gus hez got ter come ter ther door an' certify ter a clean bill o' health afore I goes a-pokin' my head inter things."

Strong in this wise resolution, he started forward to pull the door-bell, when a second-story window was thrown up and a head appeared, in the midst of a curtain of lace, surmounted by a tall hat.

"Come right in, Bob," said a hearty voice.

"I am waiting for you."

"That's Gus!" said Bob, brightening, and he hesitated no longer, but rung the bell.

The door was opened by a pert-looking servant, who first gazed at him scornfully and then changed expression suddenly.

"Oh, be ye ther b'ye ter see Misther Ridding?" she asked.

"I'm that same, an' ez our biz is important, ye'll be so good ez ter heave ahead an' pilot me ter his distinguished presence."

"Why, certain, me darlint. Jest foller me, an' we'll be dhere in dhe twinklin' av an eye."

"Let her twinkle!" graciously replied Bob, as he followed her up-stairs.

Once there, she opened a door a trifle and bade him enter. He obeyed, but one glance was enough for him, and he would have sprung back had not the door been slammed to at his heels.

After all, he was in a trap. Oscar Bertrand and Life Wolf were there, and the latter was holding a revolver close to the boy's head.

CHAPTER XII.

OFF THE TRACK.

To say that Bob o' the Bowery was astonished would be to but feebly express it. He was sure he had seen Gus Redding at the window, but here he was in the self-same room and no Gus was there. Both Bertrand and Wolf looked ugly, and the latter backed up the impression made by shoving the revolver under Bob's nose and fiercely exclaiming:

"Be quiet, you young hound, or I'll blow out your brains!"

A red flush appeared on the boy's face.

"I ain't sure I've got any," he replied, with an air of deep mortification but without a sign of fear.

"Why so?" Wolf wonderingly asked.

"'Cause nobody with hoss-sense would hev run their head inter sech a fix ez this. Darned ef I ain't a puddin'-head!"

His mortification was so deep and undisguised that, though Wolf laughed loudly, he rather admired the pluck of a boy who could think of such a thing and disregard danger when a revolver was at his head.

"Suppose I blaze away and see if you really have any brains?" he suggested.

"Blaze an' be darned. Sech a milk-sop ez me won't never grow up ter be an ornimint ter s'ciety nohow ye kin fix it."

"Oh, come now, don't be too harsh on yourself," said the sharper, not unkindly. "Our game would have roped in an older hand than you. We saw you hesitate at the door, and my friend just showed his hat and eyes to give you encouragement. At that distance you were naturally fooled. Anybody would have been. Don't take it to heart. You're the right sort, as I can plainly see."

"Enough of this," said Bertrand sharply, annoyed to see that his ally was really admiring the boy. "I suppose you see now, young fellow, the fix into which your meddlesome qualities have got you, don't you?"

Bob rallied.

"I'd like ter inquire w'ot fer you decoy a 'spectable 'Merican citz inter a shebang like this an' menace him w' a shooter? My frien', let me 'quest ye ter put down that weepson. 'Tain't a healthy thing ter hev in ther parlor, an' ef my mem'ry sarves me c'rect, thar's a law ag'in' p'intin' it with ther tunnel-cend foremost at one o' yer feller-bein's."

"Never mind your impressions," said Bertrand. "I have no time to fool with you, so let me say one thing briefly. You have stuck your nose into my affairs to an extent I will not tolerate, and this is the result. Explanations are not necessary; you know what I mean. As a result, however, you will remain six weeks in this house, a close prisoner, and then start on a voyage to China as cabin-boy. We'll see how you'll like that."

"S'posen ye ask me afore ye let me out ter work, boss? W'ot ef I say no? W'ot ef I object ter plowin' ther heavin' an' briny deep? D'ye observe anythin' 'bout me that looks like a sailor jack, a compass, belayin'-pin, or a fore-top-royal boom-in', thunder-blossomed mainsail? Do I look ez though I could live on dolphins an' mermaids an' keep my muscle up ter a John L. bigness?"

"Your wishes amount to nothing. I'm going to get you out of the country. That's flat."

"Sho! I kicked up a mighty big dust when I give a boost ter yer ole unk, Adam Woodman, didn't I? So you 'spect ef you send me ter Hoang-Ho, or Orang Outang, or Cape Hottentot Town, you kin slash 'round hyar an' scoop in Adam's boodle like a fly, do ye?"

Bob faced his captor unflinchingly.

"You know too much!" declared Oscar, with

a scowl. "You are too sharp for your own good."

"Fer yourn, you mean."

"I meant what I said. Do you suppose I am going to run the risk of being ruined by such as you?"

"Yer case must be weak ef it kin be ruined so easy."

"Never mind. I now have you secure, and you are not going around to use that glib tongue of yours. I'll ship you for China."

"All right, boss. I'll go fer ter pack my kit."

"No, you don't! Don't let him out, Wolf. You'll stay here till the vessel is ready to sail."

"Mebbel!"

As the boy spoke he attempted a dash for the window, but Wolf was on the alert. He caught the boy, clapping one hand over his mouth, and when Bertrand came to his assistance Bob was soon securely bound. Not until he had been dragged into a rear room did Wolf remove his hand from his mouth.

"Now, then," continued Bertrand, "you are where all your screeches for help will do no good, as no one can hear them except my men, but I warn you not to yell. If you do, there's a big fellow here who will come in and hush you up in a way you won't like."

"Can't I buy him off?"

"Try it, and see."

"Thank you for nothin': You're a bloomin' daisy, you be, Mister Dude; but ye've got holt o' a chap w'ot wasn't made ter be kep' down. I'm bound ter rise. Look out fer me, fer when ther Shanghai ship sails my berth won't hev nobody fer ter warm it. I'll be warmin' you 'bout that time, Oscar."

"Talk is cheap; we'll see," tersely replied Bertrand, and then he and Wolf left the room.

Bob o' the Bowery was in a bad fix. He was not only bound, hand and foot, but was in a small room from which there was no opening save over the door. At one end a rough board-wall showed that it had been hastily partitioned off for a prison.

"Nice sorter fix this is, b'gosh! Reg'lar Tombs, without no chance o' bein' led up ter a jedge fer 'zamination. But, great Scott! do they 'spect they kin keep me hyar?—keep Bob o' the Bowery down? Not any, fer Joseph! Don't I wish I could git word ter Stumpy! Ef I could, that boy would jest come up hyar an' knock ther Fourth o' July outer them—he would, fer sure. He's an awful chap, is Stumpy. But I can't get word ter him, so I must git outer hock alone. An' I'll do it, too, or loosen all my back teeth!"

Miss Helena Abbott, unlike some other rich people, had a real taste for helping the needy poor. She had money enough, and she tried to use it so as to benefit her fellow-creatures. It is true that when a long paper came around for the aid of the Wabbleshorrri natives of Chuck-incash, Africa, or the Poundcake Colony in Patagonia, she did not contribute largely; but she went alone into the houses of the poor people of New York and supplied them with food, coal, warm clothes and the like.

Which was the better way, let the poor of New York decide.

On the afternoon of the same day that Bob was trapped, she called at a low house on Elizabeth street, near Houston. When she rung the bell a pale-faced, sad-looking woman appeared, but she brightened a good deal at sight of Miss Abbott.

She had seen her before.

When they had entered the humble front room, Helena came to business at once.

"Well, how are you all getting along, Mrs. Leordi?"

"Johnny is better," said the woman, hesitatingly.

"Is any one else sick?"

"Well, you see my husband's brother is here now. He was knocked down in the street and quite badly hurt, and was taken to the hospital. He was very restless there, and wanted to come here, and as his injuries were not serious, the hospital folks let him come. But it will be two weeks before he can go out."

"Ah! I see. And that means fresh expense?"

"Yes. I'm very sorry, miss, when you were so kindly helping us, for it seems like throwing away what you gave us, but Briano is my husband's brother."

"Is he an honest man?"

"Oh! yes, miss; honest and temperate."

"Then I would like to see him, if he is well enough."

Thus it happened that Miss Abbott met the

man whom Bob o' the Bowery had seen carried away in the ambulance; the victim of one of the city's brutal "gangs," who had knocked him down and robbed him. The man's mind was now clearer, and he talked so reasonably, though still with his Italian accent, that Miss Abbott was interested and resolved to help him as she had helped his brother's family. All were poor, and they were deserving of aid.

But in the course of the conversation, Briano Leordi mentioned something which interested her. When he was half-insensible, Bob had heard him say that he wanted to find a certain "Bianca." He was now clear-headed enough to explain to Miss Abbott that "Bianca" was the adopted daughter of an old organ-grinder named Tomaso Silva, and that he wanted to find her and give to her a sealed paper which had been given him in trust for her.

He added that, on her mother's side, she was American, and that he believed she was heiress to a good deal of money.

Helena heard him quietly, though with interest.

"I'll help to find her," she then said, "for I recognize in the names, Bianca and Tomaso, two people I met on the street one day, where they were playing a hand-organ and tambourine. I took their address, and intended to call, for the dark-eyed little girl interested me, but the pocket-book in which I placed the address was singularly stolen from my pocket on Fourteenth street."

She used the word "singularly" deliberately, for she had always thought the disappearance of the pocket-book an odd one. That Bob o' the Bowery took it she had never believed, but she really was not so sure about Oscar Bertrand.

She now resolved to see Bianca, though she did not place much faith in Briano's assertion that the girl was heiress to any considerable amount of money.

Probably five hundred dollars would seem a good deal to him.

She left some money with the Leordis, and then went to the address given by Briano, but was informed that Silva and Bianca had left and gone no one knew where.

She was in perplexity, but a sudden pull at her sleeve caused her to turn. She saw a small girl in a ragged dress, who had a head of red hair which was as obstinate as though each hair was at war with its neighbors.

"See yer," said the small girl, "do ye want a straight tip?"

"Do I want *what*?" asked the lady in bewilderment.

"A straight tip 'bout them Italians."

"Do you know them?"

"No, but I'm a private detective, an' I'm onter a racket. I know whar they be, an' why they skipped. I 'spect you're on ther squar', so ther head o' ther bureau won't kick ef I squeal."

"My dear child, I don't understand half that you say. Who in the world are you?"

"I'm Nan."

"Nan? Do you mean Nannie?"

"Ef I meant Queen Victoria, I'd say so. But I don't. I'm Nan. W'ot'll you give fer ter know whar ther Italians herd? S'pect I must make all ther collat' I kin, fer ther firm is arter tin. W'ot boodle is inter it?"

The red-haired midget looked at Miss Abbott with grave eyes, and her air was business-like, so she was promised a dollar for the information on condition that she also gave her own address. This she readily did, and the matter was soon settled.

Helena was conducted to the house, and was then directed to the room occupied by Silva and Bianca. She rapped, and then heard the invitation to enter.

She obeyed. The first person she saw was dark-eyed Bianca; the second—and she grew amazed at the sight—was Oscar Bertrand! What was he doing there?

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MULBERRY STREET BRAVO.

ADAM WOODMAN was a prisoner, and had been since he was decoyed away from the hotel. As Bob o' the Bowery had suspected, it was Wolf and McGookin who had done this little piece of work. They came to him, represented themselves as detectives, and promised to conduct him to his granddaughter.

He had walked blindly into the trap, been conducted to Marco Gambora's house, and there held until Bob's movements alarmed the Padrone Prince and necessitated Adam's removal.

In his new quarters he was not unkindly treated, but little fresh air and no view of the outer world were allowed him. If he was ignorant of the traps and tricks of New York, he was not dull enough

to fail to lay the blame for all this where it belonged.

Careful study of the subject had convinced him that the Bertrands were at the bottom of it all, and he began to suspect that that the robbery on the train was due to their efforts. Probably they had known of his intended journey to the city, and had from the first worked against him.

He even suspected that in Crow McGookin he recognized a man who had occupied a seat just behind him in the railroad car, though if such was the fact, Crow had been disguised.

The old man kept up his courage well and was resolved to defy them, and to win in the end. He deeply regretted that his fears of ridicule, and his prejudices, had kept him from going at once to Superintendent Walling or Inspector Byrnes.

Of Bob o' the Bowery he seldom thought, though he was grateful to the boy for saving his life at the hotel, and thought him a shrewd young fellow.

Matt's took form when, on the evening of the day last written of, some one entered his prison-room.

It was Marco Gamboro.

The Prince nodded.

"Good-evening, sir. I have come to talk business with you."

"What now? Do you propose to garrote me?" bitterly asked Woodman.

"My dear sir, do you think so badly of me as that?"

"Yes, sir; I do."

"Then you make a great mistake, for I am your best friend. Wait—hear me out. It is true I am your jailer, but I was inveigled into it by men who were really evil."

"To whom do you refer?" interrupted Adam, eagerly.

The Italian smiled again.

"We will speak of that later. All things have a time. Let me ask you bluntly if you want to find your granddaughter?"

Adam started.

"Then you know of her?"

"That is not the question. Do you want to find her?"

"Of course I do."

"What are you willing to give?"

"So! I am to be bled!"

"I did not say so. You are a perverse man, signore. You compel me to speak plainly. Yes, I know of her. She is a fair and beautiful girl. I know her well; I am to marry her."

"Marry her!" echoed the dazed gentleman.

"Yes."

"Great heavens! she is but thirteen years old!"

"What of that? The blood of sunny Italy flows in her veins, and the Italian girls mature rapidly. At thirteen, our girls are women. Go through the Italian section in New York and ask how many girls marry at that age."

"I don't care to. Such an idea is an atrocious crime, and, if true, I do not thank you for letting me know that such cases occur," Woodman emphatically declared.

"But, suppose I should wait a couple of years before marrying," said the Prince, somewhat perplexed.

"No granddaughter of mine shall marry under eighteen, at the lowest estimate."

Then the Padrone scowled.

"Don't you get the idea that you have this matter all in your own hands. I shall marry her when I choose!" he declared.

"Villain!"

"Winner, you mean."

Adam was choking with indignation, but it occurred to him that he was not only powerless, but so situated that he could not afford to deepen any enmity against him. He forced an outward calmness and looked keenly at Gamboro.

"Do you really know where my granddaughter is?"

"Yes."

"And she is well?"

"Well, and as pretty as an angel. She favors her father, and has the rosy cheeks, black hair and glorious eyes of the daughters of Italy. She speaks good English, though, and you would be proud of her. She is under the care of an honest old Italian, but she is poor and wants for even the necessities of life."

"What do they call her?"

"Now, you ask too much."

"What was her mother's name?"

"Rose Woodman."

"Possibly," said Adam, looking at him fixedly, "the name of the child is Bianca."

The Padrone Prince started, and his confusion seemed to clearly betray that the shot had gone home. Then he bit his lip with vexation, for he saw from the new expression on the old man's face that his annoyance had been noticed. He asked himself angrily why he had been so foolish. Common-sense should have told him that Adam would know the Christian name of the girl, if nothing more.

"Come," said Adam, with renewed vigor, "how much do you want to release me?"

"I want Bianca."

"Well I'll see you in blazes before you shall have her!" was the retort.

"Just as you say," replied the Padrone, coldly. "I will not remain here to talk with you, as I have business elsewhere, but you know at last just how matters stand. I did not kidnap you, or order it, but am simply your jailer. But if you will agree to my terms I will go back on the other men and release you."

He had turned at the door to speak the last words, but Adam said nothing. It occurred to him that if

the Italian would break faith with his present employers he was liable to do so with him, but he was not rash enough to say so.

Consequently, a brief silence followed, and then Marco closed the door and went out.

"He is stubborn now," thought the Padrone "but confinement will bring him to his senses. I will win or ruin all. Pretty Bianca must not slip through my fingers, for, with her, I will win much money. I'll go over and see that she and old Silva have not run away. I may have frightened the girl."

He went outside and, on the way, had to pass his own house. It seemed as though all New York was on one mission, for, as the Padrone approached, Gus Redding stood at the door inquiring for Tomaso Silva and Bianca, much to the surprise of the party at the door, who had so lately answered the call of Helena Abbott.

Were all the Americans wanting Tomaso? wondered the Italian woman.

But she was able to tell Gus more than she had told Helena, having informed herself, and Marco Gamboro grew whiter as he heard correct directions given.

He had cause to fear Redding, and he knew it.

His breath came quickly, and he looked hurriedly around. He saw two of his pliant tools approaching—men who had once been veritable bravos in Venice—and he quickly accosted them and spoke a few words.

As a result, when Redding resumed his way, they followed close after. The night was dark and foggy, and the street-lamps seemed to give but little light, so everything was in their favor.

Gus heard their voices, but he also noticed that they were lively and good-natured, so he did not look around.

Better for him had he been more suspicious.

The Padrone Prince had drawn from his pocket a murderous-looking slung-shot, and with such a weapon he was resolved that Redding should not reach Silva's room. True, he did not object to his seeing the organ-grinder, but he knew it was Banca who was wanted.

They soon reached their victim, and then, while all but Marco made a feint of passing, the latter took sure aim and struck heavily. The slung-shot encountered Redding's head, and he dropped like a log.

"Into this doorway with him!" said the Padrone, quickly.

It was a deep recess at the entrance to a business place, and when the fallen man had been placed as directed, he was out of view of the casual observer.

"Go for the cab at once, Pietro," added Marco, and then, while the man addressed hurried away, the others seated themselves on the steps and began what seemed a careless, light conversation.

Really, Gamboro was an anxious man, for if an officer happened along and told the group to move on, discovery and ruin might follow.

Every passer-by gave them a nervous chill.

But the cab came before any meddlesome person, and the unconscious man was bundled in, the Italians entered, and the cab rolled away toward the North river.

This point they reached in due time, and they made their way upon a dark and deserted pier. Some caution was necessary to avoid inquisitive eyes, but luck was with them, and their burden was borne from the vehicle to the edge of the pier.

"Trow him well out!" directed Gamboro.

Then the body was swung to and fro until a degree of impetus was gained; then they exerted their strength together and their burden shot out into the darkness.

A moment's silence ensued, and then followed a splash.

"Good!" said the Padrone Prince. "He is done for. Now, let us get away from here as soon as possible."

They re-entered the cab, the door was closed, and then they rolled away on the return to Mulberry street.

Gus Redding was left to the mercy of the North river, which hides many a dark crime.

Nan, the girl detective, was seated alone in the humble kitchen of the house which gave her a home when a man entered without ceremony. He presented a dubious appearance, being covered with blood and having a general air of being broken up badly.

While the girl looked at him with astonishment, he dropped heavily into a chair.

"Don't ye know me?" he faintly asked.

"Lawsee, yes; you're Crow McGookin, but I never see'd ye with yer war-paint onter ye afore."

"O! have been as aulted by won ov dhe gangs," said the man, bitterly, but with a vagueness of manner which told that he was by no means clear-headed. "You remember me, Nan; O! used ter drive a team wid Ben Dukes."

"Yas, an' ye got fired fur bein' too fresh, an' then went ter ther bad," she frankly explained.

"So I did, but don't lay it up ag'in' me now. O!m sore hurted; me head is all b'ate to a jelly. Where is Ben Dukes?"

"Pop ain't come in yit."

"Thin let me lay down on dhe bed till O! kin talk wid him. Dukes won't go back on an old pard."

Nan did not like the idea of sheltering McGookin, whom she knew to be a determined law-breaker, but she had no heart to drive out a man so beaten up, and she did not object when he took off his coat and laid down on Dukes's bed.

He soon seemed to become unconscious.

His coat had been thrown loosely over a chair, and a package of papers peeping from the inside pocket

arrested her attention. In some ways she was a careful girl, and she decided that the papers ought to be put in a safer place.

This idea she carried out, and, resisting the impulse to examine their contents, put them away in a niche and then sat down to await Luke's return, not at all dismayed by the company of the wounded man on the bed.

CHAPTER XIV.

BOB DOES SOME SOLID WORK.

"THEAR's notlin' like perseverance an' grit, 'cept it's money, an' ez ther last wouldn't work hyar, ther fu'st must. I'm onter ther clothes-line, an' ther next thi g is ter git outer this hyar coop. Wonder ef they tuk me fer a fowl, that they shet me up hyar? Is thar anything 'bout my classical phiz that resembles a Shanghai or Brahma? Do I hez spurs? Not any, fer Joseph, an' I can't see why they should shet me up like a fightin'-rooster—unless it's 'cause I kin crow. Mebbe that's it."

The speaker was Bob o' the Bowery, who was still in the dark room to which Oscar Bertrand had consigned him, but he was no longer bound.

After long struggling with his bonds, he had succeeded in getting clear of them, and if the door had been unlocked, he might have walked out at any time.

But the door was locked, and he had nothing with which to try to turn the bolt, even had he been skilled in that line of business.

Still, the door seemed the only possible way by which he could escape, and he centered his attention closely on it. What interested him most was the opening just above it, which let in what little light he had.

A small, revolving window-sash at this point, he found to be loose, but the opening was so very small that he did not at first see any hope in that quarter. Yet, it was clearly his only chance, and he surveyed it sharply.

"Jest about right fer an elevated road ticket-winder," he grumbled, "an' I don't reckon I kin squeeze my Daniel Lambert an' Chang, ther Chinaman, body through, but, lawsee, it's ther only show, an' I'll take a lick at it, fer sure."

He brought a chair to the door, and, as it was heavy and well-balanced, managed to stand on the top of the back. This brought his face on a level with the little window, and by wrenching at this for a few minutes, he managed to remove it without noise.

Everything then hinged on one question—could he crawl through the window?

It really seemed a hopeless venture, but he was not the boy to let one chance go untried.

Beyond him was a hall which was dark and silent, though, in the lower hall, a feeble gleam of light showed that a lamp was burning there.

He had a clear coast, it seemed, if he could work through.

This he at once attempted, and his head was thrust out of the window like a turtle's. Then came the tug of war. His young shoulders were wide and thick, and had not been made with a view to this emergency. When they touched wood, he stuck fast, and in a most uncomfortable position. His feet were no longer on the chair, but both legs and arms were sprawling about in air wildly.

"Gosh ter gracious! it's a tight fit."

That was all he said, but he worked energetically, and was encouraged by feeling himself slip along a little at a time. Despite all the opposition he was gaining. Inch by inch he went on, and then so suddenly that he could not check himself; he slipped forward and landed on the floor with a shock that shook the whole floor.

He was up in a moment, none the worse for his tumble, and in high spirits now that he had left his prison. He ran lightly down-stairs, but just as he was passing the lower steps a man appeared from the interior, looking startled and surprised.

At sight of Bob his excitement increased.

"Hold on there, young scamp!" he cried.

"Ain't got time!" retorted the Bowery boy, and instead of dodging, as the jailer had expected, he made a dive, flinging his full weight upon the fellow and down they went together.

Bob was up first, and in a moment more he had torn open the outer door and dodged through. He heard the angry voice of his late captor just behind, and as a cab was passing he sprang on behind unseen and was whirled away.

When he had gone two blocks he was about to jump off when he heard a voice from inside.

"The North river will settle all, and Mr. Gus Redding will never meddle with me again."

Bob puckered his lips for a whistle, but wisely refrained.

"By cricky! ef it ain't Marco Maccaroni! Now, then, wot is ther riddle? That cre remark o' his sounds sorter suspicious. Wonder ef they've got Gus inter lock? Ef they hev, I'm jest t'her fish-ball ter git him out. Reckon I'll hang on i' jar an' see wot's inter it."

The boy did so, and unknown to the conspirators, made the journey to the North river with them. On the way he learned a good deal more from their conversation, and when the pier was reached was ready for his share of the work.

"Gus has got ter take a bath fursure," he muttered. "I can't wade in an' fight all them crooks, so I may as wal lay low an' be ready ter ruffle up ther big brook."

He was ready, and when the bravos threw in their marked victim, they did not suspect that a lithe figure promptly followed.

Bob o' the Bowery could swim like a fish, and he soon had hold of Gus, but the weight was rather more than he could manage successfully, and it was

a grim and terrible battle that he fought in the dark water. He did not think of calling for help—and it was not likely help would have come promptly, anyway—but he was bent on saving the man who had used him well, and he fought on grimly.

The great trouble was to effect a landing on the pier, and when he utterly failed to do this, he began to have grave doubts. Just at the critical moment, however, he caught sight of a boat rocking by the pier not far away, and hope again revived.

He swam that way, managed to lift Gus into the craft, and then, pulling himself after, sunk almost exhausted to the bottom of the boat.

It was two hours later when Bob o' the Bowery, clad in a different suit, but still decidedly ragged, walked into Ben Dukes's kitchen. The teamster had not yet returned, but Nan sat sewing by the light, which made her red hair look like threads of gold, and the wounded man lay on the bed, breathing heavily.

"Hello, Princess!" the Bowery boy saluted. "w'ot sort o' a outfit ye got hyar? Set up a horspittle on yer own hook? Who's this bloke wid claret all onter him? Looks ez though he'd been hev'n' a mill with Paddy Ryan, or Jack Burke, b'gosh!"

"That's Crow McGookin."

"W'ot?"

"That's Crow McGookin."

Bob walked to where he could see the man's face. "Ye're right ter a six-spot die, but w'ot fer do ye take in sech a red-handed assassinator as he be, I'd like to know?"

"He used to work wi' Pop Dukes afore he went bad, an' when he came in wounded I jest tuk him in fer ter let Pop do with him ez he see'd fit," Nan explained.

"I s'pose that's all hunk, though he orter be in quod, by jimminy! Don't go no great stakes on that sort o' Crow meat, I don't. That his coat?"

"Yes, an' thar was some papers in it, but I put 'em away."

"Papers, eh? Lemme see 'em."

"They ain't ourn, an' 'tain't right fer ter look at other folks's papers," replied conscientious Nan.

"Not fer ord'nary people, but me an' Pinkerton, an' Byrnes, an' other detectives, are obleeged by duty ter do it. Jess trot 'em out, will ye, Princess?"

The argument was too strong to be resisted, and Nan brought the papers. Bob opened and began to read them. At first he was interested, and he soon jumped up and cracked his heels together.

"Cricky! I've got 'em!" he cried.

"Got w'ot?" wonderingly asked Nan.

"Got ther means o' elucidatin' ther enigmatical knot o' mystery. E pluribus hooray!"

The young detective's excitement was quite excusable for even a brief survey of the papers had shown him that they were the same that had been stolen from Adam Woodman on the train—the directions by which the old man was to find his lost granddaughter. There was the letter from the sailor who was about to sail for a foreign port; and there were the various addresses of persons who would be able to tell him just who his granddaughter was, and where she was.

Of course these latter points were not revealed in the papers, for it will be remembered that the sailor did not know them himself, but the addresses therein set down would make the remainder of the work easy.

"I'm goin' ter freeze onter these *belle lettres*, myself," said the boy, coolly, as he shoved them into his pocket.

"You won't steal 'em, Bob?" and Nan looked aghast.

"Not any, fer Joseph. Mister Crow McGookin stoled them, an' I only take 'em away fer ther use o' ther right owner. Ef Crow gits his sensibilities back, say ter him he may call on B. Bowery, Attorney-at-Law, 1269 Wall street, ef he wants 'em back. But I don't 'magine he'll call fer a cent. Now, Nan, I'm off, fer I've got business."

He went, and only stopped when he reached a plumber's shop. A youthful apprentice was just closing up, but, as he knew Bob, he delayed the job for a little talk, which was prolonged to a good deal of talk. Bob had a scheme in his mind which required Glass-Blower's aid—his being the name by which he familiarly, and somewhat obscurely, called the young plumber—but it was of such a nature that he talked long before he could make the apprentice see as he did.

It was no wonder, for he was proposing a risky venture, and Glass-Blower was an honest young fellow. But what Bob said convinced him that the proposed expedition was wholly on the square, so he gave a reluctant consent.

Bob went home and to bed, but he was astir at an early hour the next morning and, having got Stumpy in position on the Bowery, with his stock of peanuts, he went to see Glass-Blower.

Soon after, the two youths—Glass-Blower was about eighteen years old—were passing along the street with a piece of lead pipe and several plumber's implements in their hands.

They went straight to the house where Bob believed Adam Woodman was now confined, and he boldly rung the bell.

The door was opened by a vixenish-looking woman who looked at them suspiciously.

"We're from Captain Truman," said Bob, genially, "come fer ter maniplerate ther water-works."

"There's nothing the matter," she said, doubtfully.

"Jes' w'ot Cap thinks, but yer see ther Board o' Health is so durned afraid the cholera will skip over ther big pond, an' fasten its awful grip onter New

York, that we hev ter look right sharp. But, law-see, 'twon't take more'n half a n'our."

The argument convinced the woman, who was very much afraid of cholera, and she permitted them to enter. She remembered having seen Glass-Blower there before, with his employer, and told the two they could go up to the bath-room and do what was needed—for Captain Truman, the owner, would have to pay the bills, which accounted for her indifference.

So up the boys went, exulting at the success of their ruse, but the bath-room had no attraction for them.

"Now, then, we're inter it," said Bob, coolly, "an' we mustn't let no grass grow under our ox-hide shoes. Jes' you sorter stand guard, an' I'll see in ther shake o' a car-boss's left heel ef Adam is loafin' 'round hyar in quod."

"Go on," said Glass-Blower, nervously.

Bob o' the Bowery kept cool, however, and in a very short time he had decided which room must be Adam's prison, if Adam was indeed there.

He tried the door. It was locked, but the key hung beside it, and the young detective turned the bolt and pushed open the door.

Just then a step sounded on the lower stairs.

"Plumbers!" said a harsh voice. "There ain't no plumbers here. It's a trick, an' they're spies. I'll break their heads!"

CHAPTER XV.

THE KNIFE-THROWER AGAIN.

THE young detective was rather startled for a moment. The voice was not familiar to him, but it was clear that some suspicious person had resolved to make himself obnoxious. Bob's first impulse was to close and relock the door, so he and Glass-Blower could make a retreat to the bath room and assume an air of innocence, but it occurred to him that the unknown would be sure to watch until they went away.

No; if anything was to be done, it must be done quickly.

So he slipped into the room which had been locked.

The light was poor, bothering him at first, but in a moment more, his name was eagerly spoken, and then his hand was clasped in another and larger one.

He had really found Adam.

"My dear boy," began the old man, I am glad to see you—"

"Tell it later," said Bob, hurriedly. "Ther buzzard is onter us. Kin you fight?"

"Can I? For liberty, I could fight like a hero—"

"Then do it at onc't. I'm inter ther crib, but ther crooks is onter my racket an' I'll git throwed cold ef we stay here. Come, thar is three on us—we must lay that bloke up fer repairs."

He had pulled Adam out of the prison-room, and they emerged just in time to see an interesting sight. Bob's ally had been a good deal alarmed by the approach of the unknown man, and, still standing at the head of the stairs, was making a pretense of innocently assorting his tools, but as the unknown continued to assert that he would do great destruction among the intruders, Glass-Blower's alarm actually became so great that he became heroic. In other words, he decided that somebody had got to be licked, and he did not want to be the victim.

"What the fiends are you doin'?" savagely demanded the man, as he reached the top stair.

"Plumbin'," replied Glass-Blower, with desperate calmness.

"You lie! You're no plumber."

By this time he was within reach, and with no thought but that of self-preservation in his mind, Glass-Blower struck out heavily from the shoulder. He was a stout youth with a fair knowledge of hitting, and though the unknown was a perfect brute in the prime of life, the blow took the ruffian squarely in the stomach and sent him reeling ten feet away.

There he dropped, speechless, and lay gasping.

Such was the sight Adam and Bob saw.

"Come!" cried the latter. "we wanter slide over hyar like a prize-beauty onter skates. Levant! Gol Git!"

He had caught Adam by the arm and was hurrying him down-stairs, but Glass-Blower remained to pick up his tools. Then he, too, followed. The sharp-faced woman stood in the lower hall, but she seemed paralyzed with surprise or fear, or a mixture of the two, and not a word did she say as they passed out.

A street car was passing, and as it went straight to his own humble home, Bob was shrewd enough to see that it furnished the safest way of making the trip. So all three boarded it and rolled away in triumph, seeing no more of the people of the house.

Besides themselves the car had only two occupants, and as Adam showed unexpected nerve, no one suspected the danger from which he had just escaped.

"I'm going at once to Superintendent Walling," he said, in a low voice, to Bob.

"Jes' hold yer hosses fur a brief period o' time, boss. I called onter ther super this mornin' an' he was jest head up in work, he was. He told me fer ter call 'round ter-morrer, an' he'd give me a hull day ter my interestin' case. Jes' wait till then, will yer? I'm gettin' ther case inter shape."

"Delay seems dangerous," replied Adam, "but if it is as you say, I'll do it."

Bob put his hand on his coat over where rested the papers he had secured from Mr. Crow McGookin, and winked solemnly.

"You kin depend onter me till my boot-straps fly

off. Ye 'member that I was solid when ye wanted ter 'vacuate this hyar earthly tabernickle with arsenic. Wal, I'm ther same night-bl omin' serious I was then, an' I won't go back on ye fer a cent—not fer Joseph!"

Adam was very grateful to the boy, and he readily agreed to go to his quarters and remain while Bob looked around for points in the game. The artifice by which he had gained entrance to the prison house satisfied Adam that the boy was sharp enough to hold his own in the fight.

We left Helena Abbott just as she entered the room occupied by Tomaso Silva and Bianca, and found Oscar Bertrand there.

The meeting surprised her, and, if his face was a true index, he was not only surprised but startled. He looked at her mutely, and seemed to wish that he could take wings and fly.

Miss Abbott bowed coldly to him, and then turned to Bianca.

"Come and meet me, little girl," she said. "I should have called long ago, only I lost my purse, containing your address—lost it very mysteriously." She looked fixedly at Bertrand as she spoke, and she believed she saw him wince. He passed his hand nervously across his face and then, looking significantly at old Tomaso, added:

"It is quite odd that you and I are on the same errand, Helena. I did not suspect, 'till now, that these good people were the same as those whose addresses you showed me, just before your purse was lost."

"Are you helping them financially?" coldly asked the lady.

"Yes. I am going to buy Silva a new hand-organ," replied Oscar, making a bold push.

"I hope you will, but I did not before suspect that you would do a charitable act unless it was of a kind sure to get into the daily papers."

Bertrand's face seemed to freeze with horror. For some time he had suspected that Helena was liable to throw him over, and, after that remark, he had ground for additional fear.

A peculiar interview followed, in which the two guests tried to outstay each other. Oscar had not come there with any charitable motive. On the contrary, he had bluntly told the old organ-grinder and Bianca that the latter was heir to a considerable sum of money, and that he would put her in the way of getting it for just five thousand dollars.

No decision had been reached, and he dared not let Helena remain alone with them until it saw settled.

On the other hand, Miss Abbott was resolved to outstay him and learn why he had been there.

Neither won. Bertrand finally proposed that they go away together, and as the young lady had really become very anxious to keep another appointment she was neglecting, she did not refuse.

They went, but her coldness kept Bertrand in a fever. Was he really going to lose the girl?

As they passed the corner of a certain street a man who had been standing there observed them, and smiled sarcastically.

"So Bertrand still has the inside track. Well, if Helena really prefers him, I suppose I shall have to take a back seat. She can follow the bent of her own will, but I very much fear she will live to repent, having given her fancy to him."

The speaker was Gus Redding.

Passing the last incident, which, it will be remembered, occurred previous to Redding's impromptu bath in the North River, we visit that gentleman the morning after his adventure—or at the same time Bob o' the Bowery was in the plumbing business.

Gus had experienced no great trouble from his plunge in the river, though, only for Bob's heroic aid, he would surely have drowned. The following morning he was a little stiff about the joints, for a January swim is not agreeable to all people, but he felt well enough to pursue a task which had kept him busy for several days.

He intended to make another effort to call on Bianca and Tomaso Silva, but the morning mail had brought him a letter which caused him to decide to visit another house first; and that, too, one in the Italian quarter.

The man he wanted to see was named Briano Leordi, and he was said to be quite badly wounded, having been assailed by one of the vile city "gangs."

He had no trouble in finding the house, but he was so interested in looking at it that he failed to observe a man close at hand who was observing him most attentively. This man was the Padrone Prince, who looked with his black eyes unusually large to see a man there whom he supposed to be at the bottom of the North river.

"Malediction! has he escaped, or is this his ghost? But no; he was going to Leordi's, and Briano is now there. Curse the luck, he will learn all, and then my jig will be up. Curse him, I say!"

Marco stood rigidly on the corner, but his hands were clinched and his face had an unnatural blueish tinge. He breathed very heavily, too.

It was no wonder. No one knew better than he the danger of having Redding talk with the wounded sailor, and he saw no way to remove him just then. He had tried it at night and failed. He dared not try it by day.

And, situated as he was, he saw his position as Prince of Mulberry street seriously endangered. He was more likely to be a plebeian at Sing Sing.

"I must get home, and prepare for flight or to secrete myself," he muttered. "I will fight the matter out, but if the worst comes, I must have some-

way of escaping the law. I believe nearly any Italian would consent to hide me."

Young!

It was a peculiar sound, and as Marco turned toward the quarter from which it sounded, he saw a long, keen knife quivering in the board not two feet from him. The position of the knife showed that it had passed him going horizontally, barely missing his body, and with such force that the house being an old wooden one, it had been half buried.

One glance was enough for him to recognize the work of the mysterious Knife-Bravo, but as he saw a strip of paper dangling from the handle, he paused to pick it off. Five brief words were written thereon in large letters:

"THIS IS THE LAST WARNING!"

The Prince plucked out the weapon with a snarl of rage, and looked around; but he had waited too long.

There was nothing to show whence the weapon had come, or whose hand had dispatched it.

But Marco Gambora's face had lost much of its ruddy color, and as he walked away his manner was no longer the old jaunty one of the Prince of Mulberry street. He was learning the truth of the statement that "uneasy lies the head that wears a crown!"

CHAPTER XVI.

WHO IS BIANCA?

HELENA ABBOTT was alone in her room when a servant announced that Mr. Bertrand was in the parlor and wished to see her. She changed expression, but made no comment, and went quietly down.

Oscar was there, a nervous, troubled look on his face, but he arose and greeted her with an attempt to be natural, though both showed signs of being ill at ease.

"I received your note," said the young man, "and have called as requested."

"I wanted to see you particularly," replied Helena, "though what I have to say is not likely to be pleasant to either of us. Let me explain at once, however, I have been thinking a good deal of late, and, as a result, I am convinced that our engagement must be broken."

"Helena!" he cried, reproachfully.

"Yes, I have had a due regard for the wishes of my father, but I find it impossible to carry out his plan. I do not care for you, and as I would not contract a life-union with any one under such circumstances, I must ask to be released from my promise."

What Bertrand had feared had come at last, but he was by no means ready to accept his dismissal. He went into an elaborate argument, and a long conversation followed. Miss Abbott had not intended to give any reason more than that she did not care for him, but his persistence finally drew from her the admission that, among other objections, she had reason to believe he was trying to secure the fortune of Adam Woodman, to the exclusion of the little girl Adam wished to make his heiress.

Oscar dared not ask her reasons for believing this, but he vehemently declared his innocence of the charge.

"On the contrary," he said, "I have of late been working to find my cousin, and with such success that I shall to-day present her to my mother. All is arranged, and in two hours I shall have her at the house. I can, at least, clear myself of this charge, and I ask you to be at the house at one o'clock and you shall see her."

Helena objected to this, but he insisted so strongly that she finally yielded and made the required promise.

He went away, not yet despairing of winning a wife.

Miss Abbott went to the Bertrand house at the designated time, and Oscar soon appeared, accompanied by a girl of about thirteen years. But this was not all. When Helena saw her she started, for it was the dark-eyed little beauty of the Italian colony—Bianca!

The child had been uneasy and ill at ease in Oscar's company, but her face brightened at sight of Helena, and she went to her at once.

"Is this really your cousin?" asked Helena, in surprise.

"She is. Perhaps you will say she looks like a full-blooded Italian. Well, only for the clearness of her skin, which is not dark enough for an Italian's, she does have little sign of American blood. Her hair and eyes are those of Italy."

"My mother was an American," said Bianca, looking wistfully at Miss Abbott, whom she regarded as her best friend there.

For Oscar she had little liking, though he had treated her kindly.

"What was your mother's name, dear?"

"Ah! I do not know. She died many years ago. But Mr. Bertrand says it was Rose Woodman."

"Yes," added Oscar, lightly, "such is the case. I have been to a good deal of trouble to find her, but it is done at last and the case fully authenticated. Grandfather Woodman has only to appear now, and I will present his long-missing heiress."

At this moment a servant appeared and announced:

"Mr. Augustus Redding!"

Bertrand frowned, but before he could speak, Gus came in quickly. He did not even look at Helena, but fixed his gaze sternly on Bertrand.

"Sir," said he, "allow me to ask by what right you have brought yonder child here?"

He pointed to Bianca, and Oscar wavered perceptibly, but soon recovered his natural assurance.

"I do not admit your right to question me, sir, but I will say that 'yonder child,' as you call her, is my cousin, Bianca Donati."

"Your cousin!"

"Yes, sir."

"I beg your pardon, but you're either greatly mistaken or something else. The girl has not one drop of your blood in her veins. She is the daughter of Paolo Lecardo and Miriam Anna Curtis—the latter formerly of Syracuse, this State. I have been working up this case, in the interest of the Curtis family, and the proof is complete. You, Miss Abbott, know one of my witnesses. He is Briano Leordi, the man who was assaulted by city roughs, and thus became one of your numerous proteges. This child is no Bertrand, nor is she a Woodman."

"It is false!" cried Oscar, angrily.

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied Redding, stiffly, "but, if you use such intemperate language, I may be led to inquire why you have tried to palm her off as the real granddaughter of Adam Woodman, when you knew she was nothing of the kind. To me, it looks very much like an attempt to use a false heiress for a true one, so that you might reap the benefit."

Oscar seemed paralyzed by this shot, but his mother came to his aid and attacked Redding with truly feminine force and want of logic. She used very severe language, and ended by informing the young man as to the location of the outer door.

"I beg your pardon, Mrs. Bertrand," replied Gus, calmly, "and I deeply regret that there should be any trouble here, but as I am the agent of the Curtis family I cannot desert Bianca. I ask you quietly to let her go with me. If you refuse, I shall take legal steps to recover her from your hands."

Mrs. Bertrand was purple with anger, but Oscar had become thoroughly frightened.

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "There is no need of anything of the kind. Possibly I have made a mistake, and I feel sure we can trust you. You shall have the girl—Wait! I have a better idea. Why not let Miss Abbott be her guardian until the matter is settled?"

Bianca, who had been cowering at Helena's side, the shadow of alarm in her dusky eyes as she heard this quarrel, caught eagerly at the idea, and no one opposed it. Gus had come in believing Helena was still attached to Bertrand, but there was that in her face which made him doubt it now.

In any case, she was honest and trustworthy.

So it was settled, and Redding took his leave with such politeness as seemed necessary. Helena soon followed, with Bianca in charge, and the Bertrands were left alone.

"The jig is up!" said Oscar, bitterly. "Our game has fallen through, and, if an investigation follows, the fact that we tried it will weigh heavily against us. Great heavens! what if the real heiress should be found?"

Bob o' the Bowery found his detective work progressing very satisfactorily. He had rescued Adam Woodman from the hands of his enemies, and placed him where he was not likely to again fall into trouble, and he had reason to believe that with the papers recovered from Crow McGookin, he could soon learn the exact identity of Adam's granddaughter.

That it was Bianca he firmly believed, but there was nothing like getting proof.

Of course it was Bob's duty to restore the papers at once to Adam, but the boy had become a good deal interested in his detective work, and he wanted all the credit of unraveling the mystery.

Besides, it would be a very pleasant surprise for the old man if the whole truth could be told him in five minutes, without the trouble of running all over New York after the threads of the case.

One of the addresses which had been given Adam was on Hudson street. It will be remembered that he tried to find it by a haphazard search, and fell among thieves. But Bob had the exact address, and he made his way over to the West side and looked it up.

He was directed to a house on Macdougall street, where he was assured that he could get full information.

Back he went, and, reaching Macdougall street, was soon in the presence of the Mrs. Lilly to whom he had been directed. She proved to be an honest, motherly-looking woman, and as she was poor herself, Bob's rags did not create a prejudice.

"I'm out this A. M. on a 'vestigatin' trip," he said, "an' I hev been tole that you kin cast a 'lectric light onter w'at is agertatin' my profess'nall buzzum."

"Indeed! What is your profession?"

"I'm inter two lines. One is peanuts, but in this hyar department Stumpy tends ter things. Stumpy is my pardner, mum, and a right good chap he is w'en he ain't got ther gloves on. But he's a knocker-out, Stumpy is, an' when he gits onter ther war-path, he jest makes gore fly 'nough ter paint ther town red. He's an awful fighter. My fav'rite biz is detective worruk."

The woman smiled.

"Have you come here as a detective?"

"Right ye be, mum. Ye hev ketched on like an elevated-road gate onter a passenger two seconds late. I'm here as a representation o' ther firm o' Pinkerton, Vidoq and B. Bowery, an' w'ot I wanter know is 'bout one Paolo Donati. I'm tole ye knowed him once."

"Oh! the Italian. Yes, I knew him, but he is now dead."

"Precactly. Did ye also know his wife?"

"Rose? Yes, she died in my house."

"Good 'nough! That is ter observe, I'm glad ye're wal informationed onter things. Wal, they had a gal?"

"Yes."

"W'ot's become o' her?"

"I don't know."

"Don't know?"

"No. After Rose died I wanted to take charge of the little girl, but Donati, Rose's husband, insisted on giving it to a man whom he knew; an', as I felt hurt, I dropped them all entirely."

"I see. But, look yer, can't ye put me onter ther secret?"

"Es. Mrs. Warden, of No. — Great Jones street, can tell you all about it."

Bob had this address on his papers, and he felt sure of success. He asked some questions concerning the last hours of Rose Woodman Donati, but they would not be of interest to the reader; then he left the house and made his way to Great Jones street. He was soon in the presence of Mrs. Warden, to whom he made known his wishes.

"I am not sure I shall tell you anything," she said. "The little girl is alive and well, but her present protector does not want to part with her, or have her case talked about."

"Not even ef her lawf' granddad wanted fer ter make her richer'n Underbilt?" questioned Bob.

"Ah! he discarded poor Rose."

"An' rept' her whirlwind he sowed, and repented in cloth an' sack-ashes, like a salted white-peter. Why, he's a goin' 'round ther city now, a lookin' fer her everywhar."

"Is that a fact?"

"True ez ther temp'rance pl'dge."

"Then I will not stand in her light. She was long ago adopted by a poor, but kind, man—a teamster—who loves her like a daughter, but he has always said he hoped she would some day inherit her grandfather's wealth."

"C'rect. Who is this hyar benev'lent teamster?"

"His name is Ben Dukes, and the little girl is called Nan."

"Nan!"

Bob o' the Bowery repeated the name, utterly, astonished, in a voice like a small cyclone.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE BOWERY BOY'S TRIUMPH.

Bob's vehemence rather startled the good woman, and she remained gazing mutely at him until he got his breath for further remarks.

"I ain't overly sure I ketched onter w'ot ye said, fer ther drum-stick o' my left ear is fractured. W'ot was it ye went for ter inform me 'bout them?"

"I said that Adam Woodman's granddaughter is the adopted child of a teamster named Ben Dukes, and that the girl herself is called Nan."

"Great Scott!"

"What's the matter?"

"Why, I know Nan!"

"So much the better."

"Sh' ther heir-outlaw? She? Holysmoke! Who else was hit by ther 'arthquake? She an heir-outlaw? Sh—NAN? Oh! oh! Ha! ha! ha!"

Bob o' the Bowery was in a mood very unbecoming to a detective of the great city of New York, but his manner was so very comical that the good woman had to smile. But Bob soon recovered his coolness.

"Quer, b'gosh! Why, she don't look like as though she had Italian blood. She's got hair redder than that winder-curling."

"That's because she resembles her mother. In the child, Rose Woodman's red hair and other features are strikingly reproduced, while no trace of her half-Italian origin is to be seen."

"Wal, by cricky! ef she looks so much like her marm, then Adam orter see the resemblance!" declared Bob, as he arose. "I'll ketch onter ther ole gentleman ter onct!"

He left the house and hurried away to get Adam.

"Wal, by cricky! ef this hyar ain't ther biggest s'prise party o' ther year. Who'd a tho't Nan was a princess in disguise? Never heard o' no red-headed princesses afore, though Nan is purty enough ter be a royal duke. Gosh! mebbe I'll turn out ter be ther heir-outlaw o' England or Staten Island yit!"

He soon reached his quarters, found Mr. Woodman and told him he believed he could take him to some one who could tell him all about his granddaughter. Then he bore him in triumph to Ben Dukes's house, and ushered him in without any inkling of the truth.

Greeting Nan in his usual way, the boy looked to see what effect the meeting had on Adam.

The old gentleman was looking at Nan with eyes open to their fullest capacity.

"D'ye see a ghost?" innocently asked Bob.

"Great Heavens! who is this girl?" Woodman demanded.

"She's a pussional frien' o' mine. Why d'ye ask?"

"Bob, she is the very image of my daughter Rose! Child, who are you?"

"Wal, I ain't got my pedigree handy," Nan replied, "but I opine I'm a chip o' some block. Ez fer a name, call me Nan, an' I'll be 'round ter all ther candy-pullin's."

"Who was your mother?"

"Can't say. Never knowed her, an' I don't like ter speak in a case whar ther evidence ain't all in. Them's my styles."

"See yer, boss," added Bob, "do she really look so much like yer dead darter?"

"She is her very image."

"No wonder," declared the Bowery boy, "fer this

hyar is yer granddarter, sure ez peas is peas. Saake hands an' drop a tear fer old Lang Syne— whoever he was— an' then I'll tell ye all about it."

Woodman did not need further proof, and he would have taken Nan to his arms had not that young lady gravely informed him that she "couldn't low nobody ter hug her while Bob was 'round, fer he was sorter stuck on her."

Then the young detective produced his papers, told how he had come by them, and the steps he had taken to learn who Woodman's grandchild really was.

The old man was as delighted as a child. He did not think of doubting Bob's story, for he had a species of proof before his very eyes in the shape of Nan, who looked so much like her dead mother that Adam was kept busy brushing away the tears.

Nan was at first rather reluctant to acknowledge the claim, but Bob settled the case with an eloquent oration concerning the chickens, sheep, cabbages and hay-seed on the Connecticut gentleman's farm, and she, too, grew interested.

"Lawsee," she said, "I never s'posed I was nobody's heiress, nor ther like o' that. I knowed Pop Dukes wasn't no mor'n a 'dopted pop, but—lawsee, Bob, jest think o' me bein' a Q een Vic in disguise!"

"You shouldn't speak so dis'spectably o' a royal pusson, Nan," said Bob, reprovingly. "Member that you're one o' ther royal fam'ly now, an' heir-outlaw ter ther state o' Connecticut. Ye wanter learn ter sling on style afore ye meet Bismarck and Sadstone."

While they talked none of them had thought of Mr. Crow McGookin, who, lying in the curtained-off bed at one side of the room, had heard all that was said, but that man now pushed the curtains widely apart and spoke in a feeble voice.

"Hal one of the men who decoyed me from the hotel!"

"Yes," said Crow, feebly; "it was me an' Life Wolf that did it, but Oi'm sorry fer dhs part Oi played, an' ef ye'll promise not ter jug me, Oi'll tell ye what will please yez moightily."

"Do it, boss," advised Bob; and when the promise was given, Crow did speak freely.

"Ye owe all av yer troubles to dhat snake ov an Oscar Bertrand," he said. "He was resolved ter have yer money an' ch'ate ther girrul out av it, an' whin he heard dhat papers had been sent yez ter help find her, he sent me on to dhe train ter pick yer pocket av them. Oi did it, too."

"Nixt, it was his doin's that ye was drugged an' robbed on Hudson strate, fer he thought ef ye had no money ye would go home, but whin ye still sthuck to dhe hotel, he sent me an' Wolf ter decoy yez away. We did it, an' ye owe all yer captivity to him."

"The infamous scoundrell!" Woodman exclaimed. "Marco Gambora was only his tool at first, but dhe Oitalian saw a way ter make a penny fer himself, an' he got up dhe oidea av palmin' off a false heiress on yez, arter hev'n first married her. He war arter dhe boodle, ye see. Dhe girrul he selected was wan Bianca Silva, an', by a queer coincidence, Bertrand had himself got his eye on her an' formed a pritty scheme."

"He began to be afeerd he c'u'd not kape ye shut up in good shape, so he thought to presint a false heiress an' make a good sum by pretendin' ter rescue yez, thus gettin' yer gratitude, which would be big when he presinted what yez s'posed was yer granddarter."

"I see; a very pretty scheme!" bitterly commented Adam.

"Twor moighty curious," added McGookin, musingly, "that Oscar an' Marco was both worrukin' ter pass off dhe same gal, an' nayther onter dhe ither's racket."

"W'ot was her name?" Bob asked.

"Bianca Silva, ez I said afore."

"Wanted ter sorter impress it onter my brain-factory. Idees, like nails, wants ter be driv in. Wal, I made ther same sort o' blunder—leastwise, I thort Bianca was ther very cherub that Adam hankered ter find, but I found out differenter in ther end."

Just then there was a timid knock at the door, and when Nan said "Come in," a small and timid face appeared.

"Hello!" quoth Bob; "hyar's Stumpy, my pugilistic pard. W'ot d'ye want, John L.? Wait!—he's such a slugger he might git ter slashin' 'round in Queensberry style ef he came in. I'll see him outside. Stay thar, Stumpy."

Bob went out, impressed with the belief that something unusual had occurred, for Stumpy's eyes were unnaturally large and wandering.

And this Stumpy, so often represented as a terrible fighting boy with a consuming thirst for off-hand "scraps" with whoever came along, old or young, proved to be a very meek little lad, a trifle younger than Bob and a good deal smaller, with a pale, thin face, a limp in one leg, and the general air of a boy who would not hurt a fly.

Oh! Bob o' the Bowery, what a wicked slanderer you are!

"Bob," said Stumpy, in a hushed whisper, "there's a man dead over thar, with a knife right through him!"

"Men die ev'ry day, Stump," nonchalantly replied Bob.

"Yes, but you know this 'un; he's Marco Gambora."

"W'ot?"

"I say he's dead."

"Show optical evidence ter my out'ard eye!" commanded the senior partner, hurrying Stumpy away.

Not far had they to go. In an alley lay a dead man, a knife buried hilt-deep in his body, his gaudy

clothes soiled with mud and his life-blood, his course forever run. Ay, stopped short in his career of wickedness the Prince of Mulberry street lay in the gutter like a miserable cat.

And on the knife which had taken his life was a paper on which were scrawled these words:

"Even the worm will turn when too harshly used!"

Bob went back to Dukes's, and found Adam and Nan getting ready to go out.

"Just in time, my boy," said the old man. "We are going to visit the Bertrands and let them know their plot has gone wrong, and we want you along."

"All right, boss; I'm allays glad ter sorter balance ther wheels o' s'ciety, an' ez I kin tell 'bout all Oscar, ther dude, will care ter hear, I s'pose I might ez wal be one o' ther investigatin' committee. Shall I order a cab, or will we huff it? Or mebbe a hoss-car, with seven conflictin' currents o' air blowin' through it, would fill ther bill. You'll find it right excitin' ter set on a cold seat an' feel a cyclone playing Yankee Doodle in seven languages up an' down yer spine."

Despite this strong recommendation, Adam declined the street-car and took a cab, and the three were whittled away up-town.

In due time the Bertrand house was reached, and Adam managed to take himself and party into the parlor, wher O car and his mother were seated, before the astonished servant could understand why he was pushed aside.

Woodman entered, leading Nan by the hand.

Mrs. Bertrand and Oscar looked up amazed.

"My dear kinsfolk," said Adam, wit sarcasm, "allow me to make you acquainted with my grand-daughter and heiress, Nannie Woodman Donati!"

The schemers sat mute and dismayed. Common sense told them that their villainy was known, and that it would do no good to act a false part.

"You see," added Woodman, "that, despite your plot, and your attempt to palm off a false heiress upon me, I have found my dear grandchild, who—mark my words—will get every cent of money I have. Not one penny comes to the Bertrands."

They did not answer.

"Sorter seems ez though they are dumb," said Bob, coolly. "Thar was a time when ther gentle Oscar wa'n't so slow o' tongue. W'ot's got onter ye, Os? Lost yer tongue? Come, let us hear a few pearls o' wisdom drop from yer 'ily tongue—do, now! Jest whoop 'em up, an' charge ther same ter bearer."

"I owe all this to you!" and Oscar looked furiously at Bob.

"Never mind; I was willin' ter do it. W'en ye charged me with stealin' that leather, on Fourteenth street, I sorter said in a whisper ter my brain-factory, that ef I ever got a chance ter do ye a favor in return I wouldn't neglect ther chance. An' I didn't—not fer Joseph!"

"I did not press that charge," whined Oscar.

"Good reason why. Ye had ther leather in yer own pocket. You was ther pickpocket, fer ye already had yer eye on Bianca, an' ez Helena had taken her adress, ye took steps ter prevent her gittin' too wal acquainted with ther gal."

"I find you villainous persons, both," added Adam Woodman, emphatically, "but I do not feel like prosecuting the family of my son. I will overlook this matter on condition that you never how yer faces to me, or my granddaughter, again."

"We accept the condition," said Mrs. Bertrand, quickly.

"So be it. I hope you will act more honorably in future in other matters—but that is your lookout. Now, young people, we will go."

They went without the ceremony of a good-by, and entering the waiting cab, were driven away.

"That air was Oscar's last flop," observed Bob.

"He's ez helpless ez a landed fish."

"Thank goodness I know him thoroughly at last," said Adam.

"My 'quaintance ain't very lengthy," said Nan, "but I reckon a little o' that kind is ez good as a feast."

"Now ye're hootin'!" coincided Bob. "Oscar ain't ther kind onter which diamonds an' eighteen-carrot gold is made—not any, fer Joseph! It sorter perculated through my brain-factory when he charged me with stealin' ther leather that he was a crook, an' time hez proved that I'm a prophet. Give time a fair chance an' help it a leetle when ther way is rough, an' i'll come up glorious at ther eend, blushin' like a copper's nose. Wal, my fu'st detective case is over, an' Nan is one o' ther royal fam'ly, spite o' red hair an' freckles."

An ocean steamer was leaving ithe cvinity of New York, and, among those who stood on her decks and looked back at the fading land, was a gray-haired old man whose face was that of an Italian.

"Farewell, land of the West!" he muttered; "a long, eternal farewell. I leave you gladly, but with a happier heart than I brought here. True, your soil covers the body of my only son, but I have taken revenge on the man who led him into crime, and on to death. Mulberry street will see its Prince no more; Marco Gambora is now as cold and lifeless as his victim, and Nicolo, the Juggler, can return to his own country. I have left my knife behind, but it was left in a good place!"

And the steamer went on, and the land faded still further, and the gray-haired Italian stood like a statue, watching the last dark line on the horizon.

Bob o' the Bowery had worked his detective case up so well that nothing was left unsolved. Ben Dukes supplied some missing links, and, for Nan's sake, gave up all claim on her, so she could go to

Connecticut and receive the luxuries and education which Woodman's money would bestow.

Bianca was sent to her relatives, the Curtis family. Gus Redding had worked up this case, which was not so intricate as the other, because he knew the family. Bianca is now in Syracuse, well and prosperous, and her dark eyes and gentle ways make many friends for her.

Crow McGookin recovered and reformed.

Life Wolf got into trouble with the law, and is now in Sing Sing.

The mystery of Marco Gambora's death was not solved, for no one knew of the man who went on the ocean steamer, but no one mourned in Mulberry street.

Tomaso Silva still plays the organ on the streets.

The Leordi brothers are in business.

Oscar Bertrand withdrew all claim to Miss Abbott's hand, and the latter married Gus Redding.

Bob o' the Bowery and Stumpy are still partners in the peanut business, but the former aspires to be a genuine detective. His success in his first case, and the money Woodman and Redding gave him, fired his ambition, and he is bound to rise in life.

It is settled that he shall often visit Nan, at her new home in Connecticut, and as she has promised not to forget him, there is no knowing what kind of a bargain they may yet make as to their future.

THE END.

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- 184 The Boy Trailers; or, Dainty Lance on the War-Path.
- 203 The Boy Pardos; or, Dainty Lance Umanaka.
- 211 Crooked Cale, the Caliban of Celestial City.
- 216 The Barranca Wolf; or, The Beautiful Decey.
- 319 The Black Rider; or, The Horse-Thieves' League.
- 335 Old Double Flat; or, The Strange Guide.
- 355 The King of the Woods; or, Daniel Boone's Last Trail.
- 419 Kit Fox, the Border Boy Detective.

LATEST AND NEW ISSUES.

- 570 Camille, the Card Queen. By Col. Prentiss Ingraham.
- 571 Air-Line Luke, the Young Engineer. By J. C. Cowdrick.
- 572 Deadwood Dick, Jr., in Chicago. By E. L. Wheeler.
- 573 The Two Shadows. By T. C. Harbaugh.
- 574 Old Wensel-top, the Man with the Dogs. By P. S. Warne.
- 575 The Surgeon-Scout Detective. By Colonel Prentiss Ingraham.
- 576 The Silver Sport. By Lieut. A. K. Sims.
- 577 Pavement Pete, the Secret Sifter. By Jo Pierce.
- 578 Deadwood Dick, Jr., Afloat. By Edward L. Wheeler.
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BEADLE AND ADAMS, Publishers.

98 William Street, New York.